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# BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA CONFLICT ASSESSMENT

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# BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA CONFLICT ASSESSMENT



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We would also like to acknowledge the contribution of MSI's Jennifer Ulman, who carried out a desk study that helped by distilling the work of leading experts and framing issues to guide the Team in carrying out fieldwork.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Drawing on extensive, in-depth interviews with a wide array of indigenous and outside experts and on a wealth of reports, books and official documents, the Assessment Team found that Bosnia-Herzegovina presents a complicated and decidedly mixed picture from the standpoint of the prospects of renewed, widespread conflict that could derail the country's tentative but notable progress in the decade since the end of hostilities.

On the one hand, the combination of a huge presence of the international community, manifested most significantly in thousands of well-armed peacekeepers and an imperfect but useful peace accord that yielded a sufficiently stable political outcome, and changing political calculations in neighboring Serbia and Croatia has translated into a very low risk of large-scale violence. Most BiH citizens are focused on improving their economic circumstances and see little to be gained from a resumption of armed conflict. There is growing skepticism about political and religious leaders that use language calculated to widen divisions between the main ethnic groups and who portray themselves as crucial to safeguarding their community's wellbeing. Recently, nationalist political parties have suffered some setback at the polls with the election of mayors from more moderate parties, giving cause for hope that the stranglehold of radical elements in the three main ethnic communities may be waning.

On the other hand, BiH must contend with the cleavages that led to the conflict and their exacerbation by the violence which has left a constellation of political, economic and social-psychological conditions strongly correlated with violent conflict in many countries around the world. Ethnic and religious differences persist and combine with deep-seated, war-spawned grievances. The Dayton Accords all but codified the tripartite division of the country along ethnic lines and provided for a governing structure that is neither affordable nor politically sustainable. Nationalist political parties representing Croat, Serb and Bosniak communities along with calculatingly provocative individual leaders continue to command the support of a large majority of their respective ethnic groups. Young people are increasingly alienated from politics while a weak economy has produced a large number of marginalized young men who may be particularly vulnerable to recruitment to violence. And as a society, BiH has failed to confront the past, allowing old wounds to fester while giving little thought to truth telling, transitional justice and ultimately, inter-communal reconciliation.

The team employed the conflict assessment framework developed by the Office of Conflict Management and Mitigation to identify and analyze the dynamics shaping BiH, make judgments about the likelihood of political violence, and offer a set of programmatic recommendations to reduce further the risk of conflict. The framework helps identify the factors discussed above and how they interact – how the grievances and opportunities to use violence combine with disincentives to conflict, the ways actors and organizations have an interest in using conflict or inhibiting violence, how the institutions of the state and society facilitate the resolution of grievances and deter violence or instead enable conflict, and the ways the international community, neighboring states, and diaspora populations affect these conflict risks and peace building possibilities.

Because the prospect of near-term, large-scale conflict in BiH is low, the report necessarily adopts a more speculative line of analysis examining factors and conditions that left unaddressed make the country vulnerable to widespread political violence over the long-term and which could spawn localized violence (with the possibility of escalation) at present. The conditions that leave Bosnia at risk of conflict - divided society and nascent state – are also serious impediments to the development of a prosperous, market-based democracy.

## Key Findings and Conclusions

- **With substantial assistance from the international community, BiH has made significant progress towards political and socio-economic stability since the end of a devastating war.** The Dayton Accords, while forged to bring a halt to the war, have provided a political structure for governing a divided society and young democracy. State level institutions are gaining more authority and capacity, the economy is recovering from the cataclysm of war, and increasing political competition within the nationalist political parties holds out hope for breaking their chokehold on political life. The reintegration of hundreds of thousands of refugees and IDPs with a minimum of violence is a tremendous accomplishment and lays the foundation for the main groups to co-exist without substantial concern about further conflict.
- **BiH has a low likelihood of large-scale conflict in the foreseeable future.** The robust presence of the international community, new thinking in neighboring countries, BiH citizens' desire for a better life, progress on addressing some of the conditions that drive conflict worldwide and were behind the past conflict, and widely held view that resort to force is not a viable option all help to reduce greatly the prospects for broad-based violence. Citizens are convinced that the involvement of the international community precludes a resumption of deadly conflict.
- **Possibility of local violence and the potential for escalation remain.** There is no reason for complacency as BiH continues to face a number of conditions and factors that are typically associated with a risk of violence. From deep-seated ethnic and religious cleavages and festering grievances among large segments of the population to widespread economic hardship/marginalization of risk prone groups such as young men and weak political institutions and poor governance at the national and local levels, it would not be difficult for some otherwise minor incident to trigger violence that could spread.
- **Main beneficiaries of the war still dominate BiH politics and economy.** Many of the leading conflict entrepreneurs who fuelled and benefited from the conflict of the 1990s remain in positions of political and economic power. While their interests may have changed such that they now covet stability and maintaining their privileged position, they remain a roadblock to enacting reforms that will promote the general welfare and processes of transitional justice. Their position among the elite makes a mockery of the rule of law and is a source of younger BiH citizens' cynicism and alienation vis-à-vis politics.
- **Failure to confront the past inhibits the country from moving forward and increases the possibility of violent conflict.** The inability and/or unwillingness of political and religious leaders and a large portion of the population to confront BiH's tumultuous recent past makes the society more susceptible to political violence and retards the creation of a robust, free-market democracy. BiH remains a deeply divided society. Cleavages exposed during the war have not been healed. Each of the main ethnic communities has its own narrative that stresses their suffering at the hands of others and ignores or exonerates atrocities carried out by its forces.
- **Absence of transitional justice likewise increases the risk of future violence.** Nothing is more symptomatic of the weak rule of law and of the failure of BiH society to come to terms with its painful past than the lack of accountability and justice for those who carried out atrocities. While some of the biggest culprits are targets of the Hague Tribunal, those that perpetrated smaller but no less heinous crimes continue to live and work as respected members of their communities – an unbearable daily reminder to victims' families and a possible flashpoint for local level violence under the right circumstances. There can be no reliable peace in BiH without an accounting of the past and a process of justice and reconciliation that it can set in motion.

- **Economic advancement will reduce but not eliminate the risk of conflict.** Poverty and inequality are strong conflict drivers. Improvement in material circumstances for the bulk of the BiH population can reduce the potential for violent conflict by generating more opportunities and hope for marginalized citizens who may be particularly prone to engage in violence and by dampening social tensions more broadly. But poverty by itself is not a sufficient condition for widespread violence. To reduce the risk of violence to low levels, a society must address other cleavages and sources of grievance, which in BiH are not economic.
- **Present political arrangements are not a long-term solution to the challenges of stability in a multi-ethnic society.** The Dayton Accords terminated hostilities but are an unwieldy and prohibitively expensive institutional framework ill suited for effective governance. The dilemma faced by the international community and reform-minded BiH citizens is that tampering with the present structure risks conflict with Serbs who regard the Republika Srpska as the paramount achievement of the war and Croats who see tampering with the canton system in the Federation consigning them to second class status in the Bosniak-dominated entity. The slow pace in erecting effective national level governing institutions also pushes into the distance possible programs that attack more directly the root causes of violent conflict.
- **The groups most prone to violent conflict are not the focus of programmatic attention.** The most at-risk groups, which include urban, economically and politically marginalized young men, are not a major focus of donor programs. Failure to appreciate the potentially toxic mix of disaffected and angry young men and irresponsible political and religious leaders who could recruit them to violence is a serious problem. Moreover, donor-supported efforts at inter-communal dialogue generally involve those already committed to reconciliation and bypass or ignore key groups or individuals who pose the most danger to peace and stability.
- **Civil society's capacity to address conflict issues is limited.** Some the leading CSOs involved in various aspects of conflict prevention and mitigation work have received funding from donors but they have not had a substantial impact either in raising awareness about the risks of political violence or in influencing the choices of policymakers. Organizations that carry out activities confronting the past, transitional justice and reconciliation face formidable obstacles. Their task is made harder still by inadequate coordination and collaboration on issues/policies of common concern. Links between national and local groups are weak. Even some of the more developed CSOs do not have the advanced skills necessary to engage directly in conflict-related work.
- **Absence of a shared vision about the country's future.** A decade after the end of the conflict, there is no consensus about the future direction of the country other than citizens wanting better economic conditions, which for many translates into closer integration with Euro-Atlantic structures. Only a modest percentage of the population seem committed to a genuinely multi-ethnic society in which different minority groups live and work side by side. Likewise, support for democracy, at least as BiH citizens have come to understand it, is not especially high. The lack of agreement on pivotal issues about the recent past inhibits the development of a consensus about the society and state.
- **Growing inter-ethnic political competition is reducing the potential for violent conflict.** Increasing political competition within the three main ethnic communities is breaking the monopoly on power of nationalist political parties, whose leaders have consciously sought to sustain inter-ethnic tensions so as to maintain their positions of authority. There is reason to believe that younger voters are increasingly disgusted with the divisive stance and poor performance of the party leaderships and could be mobilized around a positive program for reform and economic and political renewal. While increased political competition in many

countries within communities leads some parties to increasingly extremist positions, this tendency to date appears weak in BiH.

- **Different political calculations in Belgrade and Zagreb have changed the conflict equation.** Decision makers in Serbia and Croatia still want to influence political developments inside BiH but in a radical departure from the dynamics that drove the war, they do not see their interests served by hard-line nationalist stances by ethnic compatriots in Bosnia or internecine conflict. The Serbian and Croatian governments increasingly see their fate linked to accession to the European Union and are very unlikely to do anything to damage those prospects, though admittedly they have been less than fully cooperative with the War Crimes Tribunal in the Hague.

### **Recommendations**

USAID/BiH's existing strategy and program interventions contribute to ameliorating some of the conditions that are highly correlated with violent conflict. In democracy and governance, efforts to strengthen civil society, including independent media, bolster the rule of law and combat corruption, support political party development, and improve local government administration help to create a well functioning democratic system that addresses many underlying causes of conflict and is well equipped to prevent intense political competition and social tensions from degenerating into violence.

Mission programs supporting minority returnees have been extremely successful and helped stabilize a situation fraught with potential for violence. The carrots and sticks approach to municipalities contending with refugee and IDP challenges was well conceived and secured the cooperation of local officials needed for return in all regions of the country.

In the economic area, efforts to stimulate the development of small and medium enterprises and to establish a legal and regulatory environment conducive to growth are geared to improving material conditions for the citizens of BiH, giving them a stronger stake in peace and stability while also making certain segments of the population less vulnerable to recruitment to violence.

Despite these efforts, Bosnia-Herzegovina remains at risk for localized violence that has the potential to escalate because of the ethnic-based cleavages and deep-seated grievances. To address the economic, political and social drivers of violent conflict more directly, the Assessment Team recommends that the Mission:

- Recognize that Bosnia-Herzegovina is contending with a spate of conditions and factors that are highly correlated with conflict and struggle against inertia and complacency on the part of the indigenous political establishment and international community – while avoiding counter-productive and hardly credible alarmist language.
- Recalibrate selected existing programs to advance conflict mitigation/prevention objectives and combine them with a few new activities in an integrated, multi-dimensional initiative.
  - **Convene a small group of influential actors to discuss the country's vulnerability to conflict**, refine the initiative, and get local ownership.
  - **Support a process of national dialogue**, using the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the cessation of hostilities, to engage the general public and responsible leaders at the national and local level in a discussion about transcending the cleavages in BiH society that render it vulnerable to violence and retard political and economic development.
  - **Expand programming at the local level** in order to capitalize on recent electoral victories of more moderate political parties, to enhance the capacity of municipalities to



address inter-ethnic tensions and target conflict-prone groups, and support work by grassroots organizations involved in different aspects of conflict transformation.

- **Galvanize civil society at the national and local levels to address the causes and consequences and conflict.** USAID and other donors should give higher priority to groups engaged in truth, justice and reconciliation work to enhance their effectiveness in part through improved strategic communication and coalition building.
- **Support political party** renovation by increasing technical assistance and training to organizations that are challenging nationalist parties. Encourage their interest in championing pro-reform agendas that include addressing the divisions that remain risks of conflict and adversely affect BiH's political and socio-economic evolution.
- **Engage spoilers and would-be spoilers .** In tandem with efforts to support moderate political and religious voices and CSOs active in conflict-related work, it is imperative to maintain channels of communication to encourage moderation rather than radicalization of nationalist political parties and to design programs that target conflict-prone groups such as jobless young men.
- **Engage young people** both because they are generally more prone to mobilization for violence and because their growing alienation from corrupt and hate mongering political leaderships also make them potential allies in a pro-reform political movement. Interventions should combine **civic education, tolerance training** and practical projects that bring together young people across the ethnic divide to solve concrete problems.
- **Amplify women's political voices** in order to erode the domination by men of the public sphere (civil society being the obvious and important exception) and because many appear more prepared than their male counterparts to countenance inter-ethnic dialogue and cooperation and form a key part of the bulwark against the resumption of conflict.
- **Enlist the help of the private sector,** which has a demonstrable interest in stability and which could play a pivotal role in programs attempting to create employment opportunities for economically marginalized, conflict-prone segments of the population. These steps would be in addition to the larger effort to stimulate the small business sector as the vanguard of economic revitalization.

# METHODOLOGY

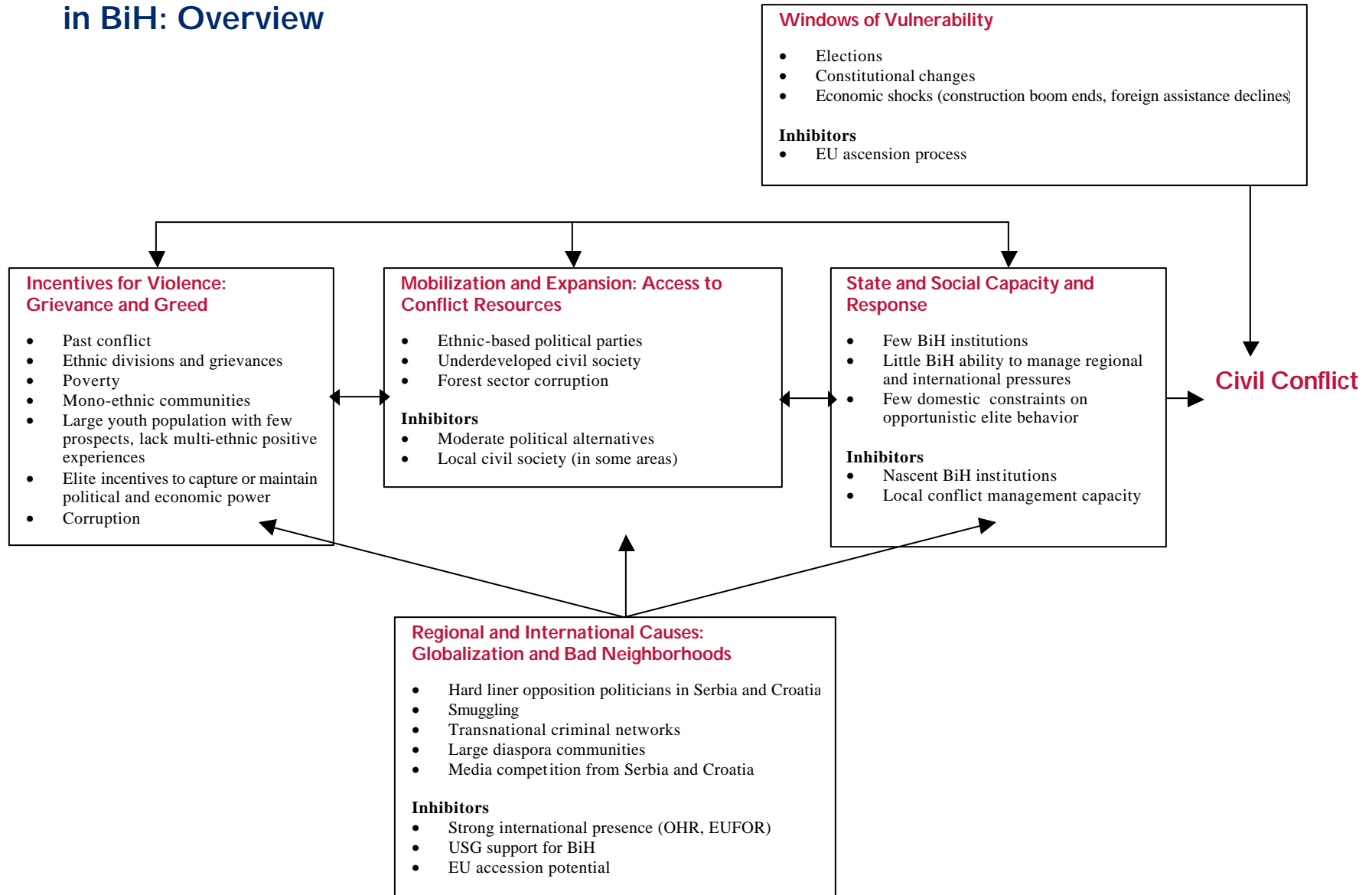
As specified in the Scope of Work, the Assessment Team applied the Conflict Assessment Framework developed by USAID's Office of Conflict Mitigation and Management to better understand the causes of conflict and risks of further violence. The Framework elaborates a framework for preparation prior to the start of fieldwork that was also followed.

The Assessment Team consisted of Robert Herman (team leader; Management Systems International), Mara Galaty (Bureau for Europe and Eurasia, USAID/ Washington), Lawrence Robertson (Office of Conflict Mitigation and Management, USAID/Washington) and Merita Maksuti (independent consultant based in Macedonia). Jennifer Ulman, a conflict expert with considerable experience in the Balkans and an MSI staff member, produced a desk study synthesizing the work of leading academics and policymakers engaged in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Prior to departing for BiH, members of the Assessment Team consulted a variety of materials, including program and strategy documents provided by USAID/Sarajevo, World Bank studies, and reports from organizations such as the International Conflict Group, Human Rights Watch and others. Team members also conducted interviews with Washington-based specialists at USAID, Department of State, U.S. Institute of Peace, the National Intelligence Council and other groups. A team-planning meeting discussed what we had learned from assorted documents, identified tasks from the SOW, mapped out our approach to the assessment, and reviewed logistics.

In Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Assessment Team met with a wide array of well-informed interlocutors from civil society and government (national, local and entity-level) and the international community in Sarajevo and across the country. During the two weeks of fieldwork, the Team divided in half in order to interview a larger number of people, particularly outside the capital of Sarajevo. The two-person teams traveled outside the capital to cities and smaller towns in various regions of the country in an effort to cover the Republika Srpska and the Federation as well as a mix of places that were ethnically cleansed or that retain a multi-ethnic character. The municipalities were chosen in consultations with Mission staff and other knowledgeable experts. Locations included Banja Luka, Tuzla, Mostar, Stolac, Trebinje, Zvornik, Srebrenica, Bihac, Prijedor, and Sanski Most. As in Sarajevo, we generally met with a combination of government officials and civil society representatives. A complete list of interviewees is included in Appendix A.

# Potential Causes of Conflict in BiH: Overview



## Note on the Conflict Assessment Framework:

The Conflict Assessment Framework helps identify causes of conflict and causal connections at different levels that can work together or in opposition to each other, to raise or reduce the potential for large-scale violence in a society. This is not a predictive model. The risk factors are not determinative. Their presence does not render conflict inevitable any more than their absence inoculates a society against violence. Rather, the framework identifies the causal paths that connect variables most highly correlated with conflict or its absence in countries around the world over the past few decades. These factors in combination generate some plausible scenarios for how conflict might occur and produce a rough, probabilistic estimate of conflict potential, which changes over time.

Bosnia-Herzegovina exhibits many of the conditions and factors that are associated with violent conflict based on findings from large, multi-country studies. This does not mean BiH is poised on the brink or that it is on an unalterable course toward breakdown and conflict. But the presence of these factors illuminates potential motives, means, and opportunities for a recurrence of violent conflict. These conflict-promoting forces are countered or mitigated by other factors that make a return to conflict less likely. In our analysis of BiH, what is striking is that numerous domestic issues, actors, and institutions have conflict potential, in some cases the incentive and capability to resort to force. The strongest countervailing force –the large presence of the international community-- is external rather than homegrown, raising troubling questions about the country's indigenous peace capacities and the consequences of IC disengagement. A robust state has the capacity to co-opt and defuse, or alternatively deter, contain, or defeat, any domestic forces that might turn to armed conflict. BiH is still very much in the nation-building process and therefore is dependent on the IC to provide the requisite tools and resources to help make large-scale violent conflict all but impossible.

# I. INTRODUCTION

The people of Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH) suffered from a devastating war from 1992 to 1995 between militias purporting to represent the three main ethnic groups in the former Yugoslav republic. Neighboring countries encouraged the conflict and supported various sides and coalitions in the violence. The conflict resulted in the deaths of some 200,000 people (the majority non-combatants) and included the worst massacres in Europe since the Second World War. Between two and three million men, women and children were forced to flee their homes. The fallout from the conflict --political, economic, social and psychological-- is difficult to overstate. In the years since the cessation of hostilities, Bosnia-Herzegovina has made notable progress in rebuilding, with enormous financial and political-diplomatic support from the international community. But BiH remains a deeply divided country. The Dayton Accords that were pivotal in bringing about the end of the fighting also put in place a structure that codified and legitimized the division of the country, largely along ethnic lines. BiH continues to experience a number of problems and conditions that are strongly correlated with deadly conflict. The unwillingness or inability of the governing elite as well as a large swath of the population to recognize the potential for renewed political violence may be the single most troubling dimension of contemporary BiH.

The conflict assessment framework is concerned with the prospects of large-scale violence of a magnitude that will derail socio-economic progress and political reform, involve widespread loss of life and destruction of property, and possibly trigger state failure. We were hard pressed to devise a likely scenario in which BiH would again suffer a major conflict of this proportion, though as will be evident throughout the report, this conclusion is premised on the continued robust engagement of the international community and steps to address persisting cleavages.

Of course, broad-based civil strife also can result from an escalation of local violence, making it incumbent on the Assessment Team to examine the likelihood of violence erupting in parts of the country and spreading due to any one of a number of factors. That is a large part of the reason the Team sought to visit secondary cities and some smaller towns that might serve as flashpoints. Indeed the Team found that an outbreak of violence at the local level is a distinct possibility and that tensions in the country are such that broader escalation cannot be ruled out. In short, there is no room for complacency when it comes to the prospects of deadly conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Contestation and conflict is a natural part of all political systems, including well-governed democratic ones. The central issue is whether the competition for power will result in large-scale violence because of the detrimental effects this has on the political, economic, and social transition in any country – and on the USAID portfolio. In general, democracies tend to have the advantage of greater legitimacy accorded governing institutions and processes as well as a variety of mechanisms for regulating contestation and ensuring that disputes are resolved without resort to force. As a nascent democracy (albeit one where the international community plays an extraordinary role), BiH invited a close examination of the capacity of state and local government institutions and of civil society to help mitigate conflict by addressing underlying and proximate causes of political violence.

It is also worth noting that this assessment takes place at a time of great ferment in USAID and elsewhere in the foreign policy bureaucracy with respect to issues of preventing/mitigating deadly conflict, combating state fragility and promoting democratic governance. There is still a great deal of work ahead in understanding the nature of the relationship –including possible short-term trade-offs-- among these imperatives. The Assessment Team hopes its work can contribute in some way to illuminating these

issues. We relished the opportunity to conduct this assignment because Bosnia-Herzegovina offers an interesting and important case of a country that is dealing with the challenges of transition and transformation in the aftermath of a horrific conflict. And though the risk of a return to violence on the scale of the 1990s is quite low, the cleavages that continue to afflict BiH pose formidable obstacles to state building. If not for the large presence of the international community, BiH might well find its way on to lists of fragile states now being generated by various donors.

The Assessment Team is sensitive to the complex political context in which the Mission is operating both in terms of U.S. foreign policy objectives and the large role played by the Office of the High Representative and the European Union. The USG remains steadfastly committed to BiH's evolution as a stable, democratic, and prosperous country peacefully co-existing with its neighbors and firmly anchored in the community of free-market democracies. Sarajevo's cooperation with the Hague Tribunal is an integral dimension of overall U.S. policy and the subject of ongoing debate and discussion among key political actors involved in the country's post-conflict transition. Together with its European allies, the U.S. looks forward to the day that Bosnia-Herzegovina meets the criteria for membership in the European Union and strongly supports efforts to encourage the country's leaders to take greater responsibility for its future direction.

Lastly, the Assessment Team recognizes the significant efforts by USAID/BiH and the rest of the international community (IC) to address the persisting problems that beset the country and render it vulnerable to violence, albeit not on the scale of the 1990s. Many of our USAID and IC interlocutors were acutely aware that some of the conditions that fueled the earlier conflict still prevail and have acted to put in place or advocate on behalf of programs to ameliorate them. Throughout the report and most explicitly in the section on Mapping Mission Programs, we make reference to programs and initiatives that have contributed to conflict prevention and mitigation goals. However, the Team believes there is more than can and should be done, beginning with recalibrating some existing programs, to give them a more explicit and direct focus on these objectives. The Mission may want or need to develop some targeted efforts that directly tackle some potential conflict drivers.

## II. INCENTIVES FOR VIOLENCE

### A. The context

Bosnia-Herzegovina presents a decidedly mixed picture from the vantage point of determining the prospects for renewed violent conflict. On the one hand, several factors and developments inveigh against a resumption of large-scale armed hostilities in the foreseeable future. At the same time, the constellation of prevailing political, economic and social-psychological conditions continues to generate or reinforce divisions that over time could lead to armed conflict or in the short-run could trigger local violence with the potential to escalate, thereby threatening the country's development trajectory. .

The robust presence of the international community, most significantly the deployment of several thousand well-armed peacekeeping forces, has radically reduced the prospects of widespread violent conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina in the foreseeable future. These military forces have shaped the expectations of BiH citizens such that they believe firmly there is only the remotest chance of the onset of renewed civil strife *as long as the peacekeepers stay in place* -- which they think is assured. Interviews and surveys show that citizens do not have much confidence in themselves and their political system to maintain peace in the absence of the international community. However confident they may be that the U.S. and Western Europe will not forsake them, the population gives every indication that not far beneath the surface is a recognition that the underlying causes of the conflict have not been dealt with effectively,

that the war created new animosities and grievances, and that there is considerable anxiety about what would happen if the international community did leave BiH.

From everything the Assessment Team could see, it does seem highly unlikely that the international community, including military forces, will depart BiH anytime soon. The presence of peacekeeping forces on the ground and respect for U.S. airpower over the horizon certainly gives the citizenry a large measure of psychological reassurance and undoubtedly serves as powerful deterrent, influencing the calculations of any group contemplating resort to force to redress grievances or to gain control over national resources. And there is no reason to think the peacekeeping operation's hypothesized deterrent value is off-set by its being seen as a provocation to any particular group or an affront to sovereignty more broadly.

The presence of armed peacekeepers and capable local police forces is surely not the only reason the country has avoided a return to conflict. Police forces with EU support appear to deter violence. And time and again the Assessment Team was told by BiH citizens of various ethnic-religious background and political persuasion that the low levels of retaliatory violence following cessation of hostilities was also a function of people having grown weary of war and of their desire to put the past behind them and return to a normal life. Perhaps more significantly, they expressed the view that almost all citizens of BiH had come to see the war as achieving little (the establishment of the Republika Srpska being the obvious exception as far as the Serbs are concerned) except to leave the country destroyed and impoverished. They opined further that citizens recognize that only the relatively small number of war profiteers emerged from the conflict better off socio-economically, underscoring that resort to force had proven very costly without yielding broad-based benefit.

Instances of violent retribution did occur before IFOR took up its mission. Yet perhaps because IFOR arrived almost immediately after the end of the war or because BiH society in general would not tolerate such acts, revenge killings have been virtually non-existent. This fact defies most post-conflict predictions, all the more so for a case like BiH where known perpetrators of heinous acts are free to walk around in the towns where they committed those crimes. This is a positive sign but hard to interpret. At the macro level it suggests the vast majority of citizens are prepared to leave the past behind and move on with their lives. At the same time, Team members met with dozens of well informed observers who asserted that inter-communal divisions remain deep and that citizens continue to look backwards rather than ahead.

The Assessment Team approached the "tired of conflict" thesis with a measure of skepticism owing to countless cases where major internecine violence prompts future conflict – and this conflict persisted for far longer periods than in BiH. More credible was what might be termed the "we all lost from the war" line of argument alluded to earlier. If people genuinely concluded the war had brought nothing but ruin that could be an important part of the explanation for the absence of subsequent violent conflict. It may also be the case that the cost-benefit calculations of would-be perpetrators of political violence have changed such that they see the drawbacks of renewed conflict as outweighing any advantages to be gained.

An even bigger factor may be a shift in popular sentiment wherein people are more and more cynical about the motivations of political and religious leaders that traffic in hard-line rhetoric. (Regrettably, as explored in other sections of this report, this has not necessarily translated into support for more moderate figures.) A surprisingly wide range of citizens asserted that these presumed pillars of the community have been corrupted (literally and figuratively) and are preoccupied with preserving their positions of privilege rather than using their influence to solve problems, help ordinary citizens, and contribute to healing conflict-related wounds on the way toward inter-ethnic reconciliation and cooperation. This may also account for some anecdotal evidence suggesting that men who had fought in the war would be far less inclined to take up arms again at the urging of what they have come to view as self-serving secular

and religious leaders. Rather than battle tested veterans ready to engage in war anew, flight not fight might be the more common response.

Also, because the war was of relatively short duration BiH does not have a whole generation of young people who know only violence – which is the case in many societies plagued by protracted internecine conflict. The 1992-1995 war undoubtedly was a formative political experience for a generation but even those who witnessed/survived horrific violence and hardship have countervailing memories, both of a generally peaceful Yugoslavia and of a post-war BiH with almost no political violence. These two cohorts however have dramatically different experiences, with different implications for conflict risks.

Moreover, the Team did not encounter nostalgia for or glorification of the years of armed conflict, even among Bosnian Serbs who have their largely autonomous RS homeland to show for all their sacrifice and suffering.

There is some suggestion that a small segment of the population that profited handsomely from the war and those who seek to follow in their footsteps might see the resumption of conflict as good for their business and thus have vested material interests in trying to bring about renewed conflict. But there is every reason to think they are deterred by the presence of the IC.

## **B. Ethnic divisions and grievances**

The dominant reality of present-day Bosnia-Herzegovina is one of a society deeply divided largely along ethnic lines and beset by a complex of conditions and set of political actors that could again plunge the country into violence. For reasons previously cited, the Team did not see this as a likely outcome but nor could it dismiss the possibility, particularly given the potentially calamitous consequences of underestimating the chances for political violence. There are elements in the body politic that under the right circumstances could initiate violence. The conflict took hold in the most multicultural Yugoslav republic, where more citizens self-selected their ethnicity as Yugoslav than in any other republic in the last census. Yet when conflict was initiated, there were enough incentives for violence in 1992 for significant numbers to support extremist positions and violent solutions from all three sides. Now the war has not only destroyed this positive Yugoslav legacy (which had not been enough to prevent violence anyway) but also left serious psycho-social scars and deeply-held grievances that for the most part have not been addressed. If allowed to fester they would certainly render the country more prone to conflict, for example, creating conditions wherein an otherwise minor incident could provoke local violence and then escalate.

With the aid and sometimes at the insistence of the international community, the country has made admirable headway in dealing with some of the complicated and sensitive consequences of the war. For example, minority population returns and property restitution are notable accomplishments. The recent arrest by Bosnian Serb police of 11 people in connection with the 1995 massacre of some 7000 unarmed Muslim men and boys carried out by Bosnian Serb and Serbian forces in Srebrenica is likewise an encouraging development. And yet these and other steps go only part of the way to healing the ethnic cleavages that continue to bedevil BiH and that grew more pronounced as a result of the war.

There has been little if any progress in producing a common understanding about what transpired in BiH (i.e. the causes and impact of the conflict). The three sides have different narratives about the war that blame other sides for the violence and minimize the role of their ethnic group in the conflict. The problem of different narratives is especially serious in younger people raised in an ethnically polarized environment, who have little to no memory of Yugoslav “brotherhood and unity.” The lack of a common understanding makes it more difficult to bring to justice those who carried out atrocities. The lack of truth



and limits on justice has impeded movement on reconciliation, without which there is no assurance of averting future widespread violence.

Each of Bosnia-Herzegovina's major ethnic communities—Serbs, Croats and Bosniaks—has legitimate grievances that could form the basis of a violent response to sufficiently serious provocations. It is important to make clear that the Team found no evidence to suggest that even aggrieved groups have devised plans for initiating violence. However, an incident, perhaps in a community where ethnic tensions remain high, could trigger a violent spasm that spreads. The combination of residual fear, unaddressed ethnic-based grievances, pent-up frustration (e.g. over poor economic conditions and prospects) and frequently intemperate political and religious leaders provide the necessary ingredients to motivate violence.

It is near universally believed that in the unlikely event that violence breaks out again in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the conflict once more would follow well-defined ethnic fault lines. Ethnic identity (and the overlapping categories of religious affiliation) remains the most salient self-identifying label and the likely dimension along which aggrieved and disaffected citizens could be mobilized to engage in armed conflict.

Almost universally, BiH citizens interviewed asserted that the number of actual *minority* returnees (i.e. not including those who returned to areas where they counted among the ethnic majority or those who successfully reclaimed property but sold it and never moved back) is considerably fewer than the over one million total returnees documented by UNHCR. A total of approximately 2.2 million people were displaced by the conflict. This level of return remains an impressive development, given the scale of the displacement and the many (largely economic) disincentives to return. Many of our well-placed interlocutors proudly pointed out that repatriation was met with a minimum of violence, which they persuasively argued cannot be adequately explained by the visible presence of heavily armed international peacekeepers. Given the brutality of the conflict and the large number of non-combatants who were killed, one would have expected much more retaliatory violence, at least on an isolated, local basis. The relatively modest return of minorities to areas in which they used to live attests to the *de facto* success of ethnic cleansing and would seem to reflect the overall lack of progress on truth and justice in these areas. This situation does not indicate a bright, inter-ethnic future for the country as a whole.

This sober conclusion, perhaps predictably, is shared by those BiH citizens most closely involved in inter-ethnic dialogue, human rights and transitional justice issues. Based on its extensive interviewing, the Assessment Team found that beneath the surface of emerging stability remain deep divisions and social-psychological trauma that continue to play out in political terms in the widespread support garnered by nationalist parties and pervasive mistrust of the intentions and motivations of other ethnic groups.

As a society, BiH has made little progress in facing the past. Each of the ethnic groups sees itself only as a victim, understandably calling attention to the sufferings of its own community, but downplaying, ignoring completely, or even justifying grave human rights abuses and other transgressions carried out by its side against others. Acknowledging what happened—in an as objective account as possible—is only the first step in a difficult process that generally also includes bringing to justice those who perpetrated atrocities large and small, and ultimately forging some durable reconciliation between and among the three communities. We were surprised and disappointed to learn that even within ethnic communities there has been little systematic, organized discussion about what took place, what it means, and how to move forward.

This general state of affairs is all the more troubling in light of one of the central findings of the literature on conflict that the strongest predictors of violent upheaval is whether the country had experienced civil strife in recent years. Old issues are exacerbated, new grievances are created, institutions are weakened, and organizations are created to channel grievances and take advantages of opportunities to use violence

by prior conflict. Now after conflict, if unaddressed, these problems, opportunities, and organizations may grow in strength, while institutions may remain weak. These factors accumulate and over time erode social cohesion, leaving the angry, alienated, and disaffected susceptible to the fear-mongering and hate-filled propaganda of skilled demagogues. Where nationalist political elites either do not or cannot direct the violence, there is still a risk of localized conflict that can nevertheless entail significant suffering while carrying with it the omnipresent possibility of escalation.

Improving economic conditions and prospects can alleviate some of the stresses in the polity but they are unlikely to repair the serious rifts that tend to fuel broad-based violent conflict. Failure to address a society's underlying divisions often means leaving in place significant segments of the population with the incentive and motivation to resort to violence to achieve their aims. Deep mistrust and a fraying social fabric also pose major obstacles to the country's economic and political progress, making it very difficult for a country to pursue prosperity as a solution to the problem of conflict vulnerability.

In the case of Bosnia-Herzegovina, each of the three main ethnic groups continues to harbor deep resentments and residual fear a decade after the negotiated end of armed hostilities. Croats depict themselves as the most vulnerable of the three communities, citing their minority status within the Federation in contrast to the far-ranging autonomy accorded the Serb-dominated RS. Relatively prosperous, BiH Croats still speak of having to endure second-class citizen status and are apprehensive about the intentions of the majority Bosniaks.

Despite the strident nationalist rhetoric that often emanates from senior officials of the HDZ party and occasionally from local Catholic religious leaders, the Assessment Team did not encounter any meaningful sentiment for inciting violence as a strategy to ensure security and prosperity for ethnic Croats. At the same time, the international community needs to remain engaged and vigilant because the Croat population has residual incentive and capacity to participate in violence, especially if the cantonment structure on which they depend for a degree of autonomous decision making comes under attack. .

For their part, the majority Bosniaks, have the most to gain politically from the advent of an integrated, well functioning state and the corresponding dissolution of RS and the Federation. As the principal victims of the violence that swept BiH and deprived of a hard-earned military victory on the ground because of the intervention of the international community that insisted on a negotiated end to the fighting, Bosniaks are the least satisfied of the three antagonistic communities with the status quo. But there is no reason to think that the predictable and understandable desire to alter post-conflict arrangements more to their advantage would lead Bosniaks to take up arms to achieve those ends. Even with the preponderance of military might under the control of the state's Muslim leadership, the prospect of a deliberate strategy of aggression against the RS or the Croat portion of the Federation is all but inconceivable.

For the country's Serb community, the establishment of the Republika Srpska is the prize that makes the sacrifices of the war tolerable. Its continuation is sacrosanct because the RS is seen as the best way to safeguard the rights of the Serb community within the borders of BiH. While preferring to be annexed by Belgrade for security and economic reasons, and intent on seeing themselves as history's victims (with a concomitant antipathy for the international community), BiH's ethnic Serbs find the status quo generally acceptable. A steady diet of disappointing public statements notwithstanding, RS political and religious leaders give no indication they have a compelling incentive to embrace violent conflict as an efficacious way to advance collective interests.

In the judgment of the Assessment Team, one likely flashpoint for violence would involve any effort by BiH authorities to change the Dayton Accords (which serves, de facto, as the constitution) so as to eliminate the RS or otherwise take away the autonomy exercised by the Serb community. That the arrest

of some mid-level indicted war criminals in RS and the banning by the High Representative of a number of ethnic Serb political candidates did not touch off violent protest should not be construed as indifference to the fate of the RS among its inhabitants. Preservation of the RS is deemed paramount, even as the Serb political elite also grudgingly accept the notion of a BiH state.

Likewise, if either the Bosniak or Croat communities believed it was under grievous threat from the other or from the Serbs, it is not difficult to imagine armed resistance or even preventive action. The level of mistrust and animosity runs sufficiently deep so to give credence to such a scenario. Fortunately, the probability of this outcome is still fairly low, owing to the previously cited growing cynicism toward political leaders whose high positions have been inextricably linked to perpetuating tensions between the country's constituent groups.

These tensions show little sign of abating and are aggravated by institutional structures and prevailing mindsets that cast politics as a zero-sum game. Within each of the previously warring ethnic groups, gains by one community are invariably seen as a loss for the others. Politics is exceedingly polarized and frequently dominated by those espousing hard-line, less conciliatory views. According to various analyses, voting across the ethnic divide is rare. Even recent local electoral setbacks for the hard-line nationalist parties should not be interpreted as evidence of widespread popular disenchantment with their general outlook, so much as referenda on their poor governing performance.

In the RS, for example, recent elections saw the defeat of several incumbent mayors from the ranks of nationalist SDS party by candidates from the more moderate SNSD. This is an encouraging development and donors should try to support these local administrations (see recommendations). But the fact remains that these insurgents are local standard bearers for ethnic-based parties that defeated sitting office holders based mainly on issues of poor economic performance and corruption rather than any vision of inter-ethnic cooperation and harmony. A key adviser to the successful mayoral candidate in Trebinje confided that such a platform would have doomed the campaign, suggesting that transcending ethnic divisions is a monumental task, even in a city that for all intents and purposes has been ethnically cleansed.

The presence of international peacekeepers probably contributes, albeit unintentionally, to the irresponsibility of political and religious leaders who understand that divisive or inflammatory remarks won't be allowed to foment violence and hence they do not have to be overly concerned with the consequences of their unhelpful actions. A more or less democratic system of government under the watchful eye of the High Representative affords public figures the opportunity to engage in irresponsible rhetoric without worrying about serious fallout in the form of sharper ethnic antagonisms or even possible violent conflict in the future. The structure inadvertently eliminates the disincentive to act provocatively.

The larger point is that well functioning institutions in an established democratic system are generally effective in addressing and/or channeling inevitable political conflict in constructive ways that reduce the likelihood of violence. Moreover, such systems tend to be accorded greater legitimacy by political actors who accept the rules of the game and believe in the basic fairness of the process – making compromises easier to attain. And the protection of minority rights, the hallmark of a durable democracy, radically reduces fear/insecurity and helps to undercut the zero-sum view of politics. All of these properties of democratic systems tend to push politics in the direction of non-violent change. As an immature democratic polity, Bosnia-Herzegovina is still developing the institutions, political culture, and skills that underpin a resilient democracy and give it greater capacity to mitigate and manage conflict.

In sum, under present conditions none of the three major ethnic communities has an overriding incentive to try to unleash violence to advance the interests of its own group. Hard-line elements within each community still command a majority following and exercise a disproportionate influence in the respective nationalist political parties. But a growing percentage and perhaps a majority of Croats, Serbs and Bosniaks appear to believe that the costs and consequences of a return to armed conflict far exceed

whatever advantages might accrue. This evolution in thinking is a prerequisite for BiH's socio-economic and political progress.

### **C. Incentives of regional actors**

While dealt with in greater detail in the section on the international dimension of conflict vulnerability, it is worth noting here that political developments in neighboring capitals are operating to reduce further the possibility of broad-based violence. Virulent, expansionist nationalism is on the decline in both Zagreb and Belgrade with governing parties focused increasingly on Brussels and the lure of EU accession rather than events in Republika Srpska or Croat-dominated areas of the Federation. For decidedly self-interested economic and political reasons, there is not much enthusiasm on the part of ruling parties in Croatia and Serbia to encourage BiH's Croats and Serbs to harbor their respective dreams of unification. Make no mistake; occasional visits to BiH by Croatian and Serbian politicians, as well as political speeches given in Zagreb and Belgrade all indicate an ongoing interest in political outcomes in Bosnia-Herzegovina. However, no one discusses or threatens the use of violence. Any such talk would seriously jeopardize or doom altogether the paramount goal of integration into Euro-Atlantic structures. The EU has not placed any conditions on Serbia or Croatia vis-à-vis activities in BiH but has made clear its views on cross-border meddling. In short, decision makers in the key neighboring countries have little to gain and would pay an extremely steep price if seen as undermining BiH's stability and instigating violent conflict.

Unfortunately, this does not stop hard-line Croats and Serbs from continuing to indulge dangerous irredentist fantasies, suggesting a lag between politics within the two entities and the geo-political realities taking hold in the two bordering countries that were so culpable in igniting the Balkans conflagration a decade ago. The Assessment Team is cautiously optimistic that as Belgrade and Zagreb loosen the bonds with their next door kin, political leaders of the Croat and Serb communities will resign themselves to a future firmly in BiH and reorient their thinking toward Sarajevo and the construction of an effective state (albeit one that safeguards their place in the country's political, economic and social life, most likely through far-reaching autonomy).

### **D. Economic and demographic sources of conflict**

Ethnic cleavages are not the only source of possible conflict-inducing grievances in contemporary Bosnia-Herzegovina. The economic plight of the vast majority of BiH citizens has created widespread discontent that could form the basis of protest politics, which in turn has the potential to turn violent – perhaps taking people by surprise as in Kosovo in March 2004. As the population becomes more aware of the economic progress achieved in most neighboring countries, feelings of resentment are bound to intensify. Popular anger is increasingly directed at BiH political leaders but there remains the risk that nationalist politicians will deftly deflect and channel these frustrations in an ethnic-based, scape-goating strategy. Alternatively, the international community could become the misplaced target of angry citizens convinced that their material hardship is a function of policies designed to keep BiH weak and marginalized but once again violent conflict would not seem a likely outcome.

Based on what we know from other societies, a critical factor in whether violence occurs under conditions of material privation is the role of young, unemployed or otherwise economically marginalized men. This is not a deterministic analysis but a recognition that this group historically tends to be among the most available for recruitment to violence. A lack of economic opportunities together with mounting frustration over the country's isolation and barriers to travel beyond BiH's borders makes for an unstable combination. A recent ESI report notes that BiH programs are not effectively targeting the economically marginalized, thereby compounding existing grievances.

Financially strapped national, entity and local government institutions are poorly positioned to provide critical public goods (e.g. health care, education, social services) in sufficient quality or quantity to cushion the impact of poverty and lack the resources to co-opt those who threaten political instability with other targeted social benefit programs. While overall living standards in BiH are significantly better than the conditions in developing world countries, expectations are much higher for people living in Europe. That BiH has fallen behind traditionally lesser-developed parts of the former Yugoslavia is the source of frustration and resentment.

It is true that with so many young people having fled BiH during and soon after the war, possible conflict-fueling social pressures are less than they would otherwise be. And ordinarily having a large diaspora that has met with a fair degree of economic success (in this case, in Western Europe and the U.S.) can alleviate some of the hardship in the homeland through a steady flow of remittances. In the case of BiH, there is reason to think that a fairly high proportion of those who have remained in the country are among the least entrepreneurial and least well-equipped to deal with the challenges of building a better life in a post-conflict, free-market setting. In addition, some experts believe that remittances are relatively low -- although other estimates put the figure at some 12% of GDP-- compared to other post-conflict countries because in BiH whole families rather than individuals departed, weakening ties to the homeland and reducing the need to send money to relatives back home. If true, this may contribute slightly to reducing the chances of conflict; highly mobilized diaspora communities can be prone to extremist politics and often possess the financial muscle to create serious problems.

Economic hardship in and of itself is unlikely to produce violent conflict on a large scale. However, when poverty and inequality are closely correlated with ethnic divisions or when young people, especially men, have few opportunities for economic advancement, the possibility for mobilizing them to engage in violence increases sharply. Unscrupulous political leaders can tap into this growing resentment by promising economic rewards for those participating in violence and consciously attempt to harness it for political ends - or it could explode spontaneously without much in the way of organization.

That young people are so disillusioned about politics cuts both ways in terms of the potential for violent conflict. On the one hand, high levels of cynicism may preclude participation in any organized political activity, including violent protest. On the other, deep alienation and resentment could make them susceptible to the blame-centered exhortations of political figures seeking to capitalize on pent-up frustrations of a group historically prone to violence.

## **E. Emergence of mono-ethnic communities**

Another concern about contemporary Bosnia-Herzegovina that is intensely discussed in some circles is the impact of the emergence of a largely tripartite society where only a small percentage of the population has extensive, ongoing inter-action with citizens from different ethnic groups. It was not the intention of the architects of the Dayton Accords to in effect ratify separation of the various ethnic groups but with minority returns having fallen far short of restoring pre-conflict ethnic geography, the large majority of BiH citizens are living in homogenous communities.

The decline of multi-ethnic communities is likely to reduce any residual collective commitment to a more integrated, cosmopolitan conception of BiH. Young people not only lived through the trauma of violent conflict but because of the de facto success of ethnic cleansing in most regions of the country, are far less likely than the preceding generation to have first hand experience in a multi-ethnic setting. The inter-communal violence that wracked Bosnia-Herzegovina is tragic testimony to the fact that close proximity of different ethnic groups is no guarantee of mutual understanding and social harmony. But virtual segregation is no solution to the problem of intolerance and lack of trust between different groups – a permissive condition for inter-ethnic conflict. Isolation increases the probability that the respective ethnic

communities will never have to expose their biased narratives to outside scrutiny and will continue to insist that they have a monopoly on suffering while conveniently ignoring the injustices perpetrated against others. This will leave little room for dialogue, a first step in the long process of reconciliation.

The separation of groups is not solely a function of the dearth of multi-ethnic communities. With the possible and notable exception of Sarajevo, even in municipalities with a substantial minority population, meaningful interaction across the ethnic divide is extremely limited. This applies to Mostar and Stolac, the latter the site of an elementary school that in essence houses two ethnically homogenous schools –one Bosniak, the other Croat-- under one roof and takes steps to ensure that same age students do not interact. In both cities segregation does not appear to have translated into the absence of tensions. Without at least a modest effort to address these tensions, such divided cities struck the Assessment Team as potential flashpoints for local violence.

The Assessment Team did not have the opportunity to meet with social psychologists or similar professionals who could speak knowledgeably about the societal consequences, especially for young people, of growing up in mono-ethnic or rigidly divided ethnic communities. If one accepts the premise that Bosnia-Herzegovina needs to come to terms with its recent past in order to move forward as a country, ethnic separation as it presently exists would seem to preclude eventual reconciliation.

## F. Competition over natural resources

Bosnia-Herzegovina does not fit the typical profile of countries plagued by deadly conflicts (e.g. Liberia; Sierra Leone, Aceh, Indonesia) because control over natural resources has **not** been a major driver of violence. In this regard, it helps that BiH is not particularly well endowed with natural wealth. This doesn't necessarily eliminate intense political competition over control of state coffers but it does spare BiH the seemingly intractable wars of plunder.

The Team does, however, want to underscore the widespread problem of illegal harvesting of timber (one of the few sources of natural wealth in BiH), primarily in parts of the RS. Leaving aside the adverse environmental consequences of such activity, we were told by a few reliable sources that proceeds from the sale of such lumber go to criminal networks and/or the nationalist political parties rather than to the government, where at least in theory it could be used to support key institutions to help strengthen the rule of law or to ameliorate conditions that make conflict more likely. To some degree the same can be said of profits from various state-owned enterprises. USAID's programs in wood processing as well as electricity sector reform seek to reduce the scope for corruption and can help on the risks of conflict as well.

## G. Corruption and transnational crime

Bosnia-Herzegovina has a serious problem with corruption and transnational crime. World Bank reports, assessments by donor governments, and analyses by international NGOs such as Transparency International documenting the pervasive nature of these related scourges, principally trafficking of arms, drugs and people. Organized criminal activity both reflects and contributes to state fragility and renders BiH more vulnerable to conflict

Those who engage in such illegal activities have little interest in the emergence of effective state institutions capable of enforcing the rule of law and bringing perpetrators to justice. A well functioning state, one that effectively polices its borders, for example, would jeopardize this business.

While feckless political institutions and corrupt officials cannot be equated with conflict, weak rule of law creates an environment more conducive to violence. The most obvious link to instability may be the ongoing illegal trade in weapons (a problem across the entire Balkan region). This perpetuates corruption

among border control officials and increases lethal arms in the population. The continuing flow of weapons into a country with BiH's recent history and present cleavages cannot be helpful from the standpoint of reducing the chances of violent conflict.

As alluded to in the previous section on competition over natural resources, the major issue connecting politics, corruption and conflict is the money received by nationalist political parties from transnational criminal activities. Money generated from trafficking in weapons, drugs and persons finds its way into party coffers, which contributes to unhelpful nationalist activities. While there is no direct link to the possible onset of deadly conflict, the nexus between politics and criminal activity underscores the sad state of governance and the rule of law, two major attributes of a fragile state that contribute to a larger political environment more susceptible to conflict.

Another way transnational criminal activity could engender conflict revolves around the smugglers who prospered during the 1992-95 war and those who have maintained the tradition. These networks have a interest in instability that disables the rule of law, leaving a more chaotic climate in which their lucrative illegal activities would thrive. It is conceivable that present day traffickers could create serious problems for state institutions engaged in clamping down on transnational crime. Even well-armed criminal gangs would not be a match for EUFOR peacekeeping forces and well trained and equipped local police.

### **III. MOBILIZATION AND EXPANSION: ACCESS TO CONFLICT RESOURCES**

Even deep-seated grievances do not spawn large-scale conflict. Would-be perpetrators of violence require the means to mobilize others through access to financial and organizational resources. Do these individuals or groups with incentives to use violence have the ability to organize, to carry out and sustain violence on a wide scale? Are there pools of willing recruits to the cause and do they have access to weaponry? And what are the conflict prevention and peace capacities, including both formal and informal institutions, arrayed against potential mobilization for violence? Answers to questions about resources help to determine the probability of violence and the magnitude of conflict should it erupt.

Organizational structures are critical because they can help forge a sense of solidarity and articulate group goals, as well as monitor the behavior of individuals who are part of the group. Because participation in violence carries heavy physical and emotional costs, would-be conflict entrepreneurs confront a collective action problem. No matter how strong the incentive, most people would rather see others do the dirty work and share in whatever rewards they expect violence will bring. Mobilizing people to overturn the existing political or economic order is a particularly daunting. Yet around the world, political actors have gained access to requisite resources and channeled long-standing grievances into violence and caused suffering on a major scale. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, different political actors --leaders and followers-- with access to conflict resources could be tempted to embrace violence under the right set of conditions. BiH has some local institutions and structures that dampen the prospects for political violence. Highly capable, non-politicized police forces, parts of the judiciary, the Election Commission and other institutions have proven effective at mitigating tensions, settling disputes, and containing problems.

#### **A. Political parties**

Bosnia-Herzegovina's ethnic-based political parties remain the principal means by which leaders could mobilize supporters to engage in violence. Despite significant inroads by more moderate forces within some of the main nationalist parties, hard-liners retain the upper hand and continue to engage in behavior

that is irresponsible and provocative but at least until now stops short of an incitement to violence. The combination of large-scale political and military presence of the international community inadvertently allows political and religious figures to keep ethnic tensions brewing for their own self-interest with little risk that these tensions would spill over into actual violence.

Political leaders continue to perpetuate ethnic stereotyping (abetted by segregated schooling and competing myopic narratives about the causes and prosecution of the war) and fear that other ethnic groups threaten their own. Legitimate grievances are transformed into resentment, frustration, fear and even hatred in the hands of manipulative political party hierarchies. The main nationalist parties all encourage inter-communal mistrust. For example, residents of the RS are regularly told that Bosniak and Croat decision makers in Sarajevo, backed by their anti-Serb allies in the international community, are will scrap the separate ethnic Serb entity. Croats are fed a steady diet of questionable accusations about being “second class citizens” whose rights are precarious in the hands of the Bosniak majority.

SDS, SDA and HDZ appear convinced that their dominant position requires them to foster at least a moderate level of inter-ethnic tension; none give the slightest indication they are interested or capable of engaging in a genuine national dialogue about what transpired during the war years and steering the country toward reconciliation. As the Team has frequently pointed out, politics is viewed as a zero-sum game in which compromise and cooperation are weakness that can be exploited.

Compounding the danger posed by unrepentant political parties is that the leaderships have access to ample resources in some cases due to close links with transnational organized crime. Resources allow party bosses to dole out patronage, in jobs or financial assistance, in return for loyalty that could be exploited.

## **B. Civil society**

The number of civil society organizations (CSOs) has grown dramatically as a function of both more reform and direct financial support from the international community. The proliferation of groups and dramatic increase in funding notwithstanding, the Third Sector remains underdeveloped with limited capacity to shape political outcomes. Management and administration remain weak as does advocacy, constituency identification and mobilization. CSOs are not held in particularly high regard by the general public, which remains fairly ignorant of their role. This less than inspiring portrait of the civil society landscape has both positive and negative dimensions for violent conflict.

On the one hand, BiH does not have influential, national, mass-based organizations that have the near-term potential to mobilize citizens to engage in violence. One cannot dismiss the possibility that such groups could emerge but most experts we consulted thought the chances were slim. In contrast, smaller networks of conflict entrepreneurs undoubtedly exist or had existed previously and could be reconstituted but there is no evidence that they pose a threat to stability, except perhaps on a local basis.

The flip side is that a relatively weak civil society, including the few groups that are engaged in different aspects of conflict prevention and mitigation, have had modest impact at best, particularly at the national level. Disaffected and cynical citizens are difficult to rally, whether for destructive or constructive ends. The capacities of the conflict prevention segment of the CSO sector are the subject of the next section.

Independent media presents a similarly mixed picture. The good news is that for a variety of reasons the chances of broadcast and print media being harnessed for ethnic-based civil strife have been greatly reduced. The disappointing news is that those mediums do not come anywhere near their potential to contribute to conflict prevention and that print media still has its share of dailies and weekly publications trafficking in fear and intolerance. Again media capacities are elaborated in the next section.



## C. Social groups

One of the principal drivers of conflict in countries around the world is economically marginalized, unemployed young men. This social group appears to be the most at-risk for mobilization for violence. Conditions grow more volatile when there is a youth bulge --a disproportionately large percentage of the population between the ages of 15 and 25-- a situation that does not appear to pertain in Bosnia-Herzegovina. There are other factors that are relevant and together they provide ample reason to carefully monitor developments.

While few of the young BiH men falling into this category would have fought in the war, many of them would have been old enough to have experienced violence, lost family members, been forced to flee their homes -- all the ingredients for deep-seated grievances against the other ethnic communities. How many of these young men possess or can gain access to guns is hard to assess but knowledgeable interlocutors point out that firearms are plentiful and easy to come by for those who seek them.

Unlike their parents or grandparents, the majority of these young people have no experience living in a well-functioning, multi-ethnic society. The exception to this would be in Sarajevo or a small number of secondary cities or towns that have managed to re-establish at least a veneer of multi-ethnicity in the post-war time. But even in these cases, youth under twenty spent their formative years either in or recovering from a war that made positive ethnic relations and perceptions difficult. Furthermore, even if they know about what life was like prior to the war, it would be perfectly understandable if they regard with cynicism nostalgic talk about inter-marriage, social harmony and a transcendent Yugoslavian identity since none of that spared the country from an ethnic-based conflagration. Informal discussions with a number of BiH citizens surfaced concerns that young people who have come to consciousness in the years since the war are being socialized in an ethnically polarized land with little exposure to a more cosmopolitan, pluralist conception of their country.

One cannot say with any authority whether such young people are particularly prone to mobilization for violence. Without effective organization there may be sporadic mob-related violence but the chances that such disturbances would spark a wider conflict are extremely low. The equation could change significantly with the emergence of a mass-based organization or nationalist political party determined to improve its capacity to mobilize followers. Young and/or marginalized people in post-conflict, ethnically divided societies often tend to hold negative images of the other groups that deny their humanity and are generally intolerant of difference -- dangerous markers for any society.

Former combatants may be the most dangerous of the country's marginalized social groups because in addition to harboring war-generated and more recent economic-based grievances, they are battle tested, likely have access to weapons and may well be part of cohesive networks that could be reconstituted. The Team was not able to determine with any degree of confidence whether local military groupings that formed during the war could be reassembled in response to some potentially catalytic event. In other words, do these particular ethnic networks that were forged in war remain viable such that former commanders could quickly mobilize those who had once served under them? And do these would-be recruits to violence have armaments already and/or could weapons be procured quickly?

A related consideration is the role of the diaspora, specifically in providing funds that fuel armed conflict. In numerous cases, economically prosperous diaspora populations donate money to support military operations in their homelands. With tens of thousands of BiH citizens having resettled in wealthy countries in Western Europe and the U.S., this potential exists but the Assessment Team could not turn up any evidence to suggest such a propensity to instigate violence on the part of these emigrants. The situation could change depending on events in BiH.

Ethnicity is not the only way to think about groups that could be mobilized for violence. The impoverished, pensioners (many of whom are poor), economically marginalized young and middle-aged men and women all face bleak prospects that could make them vulnerable to engaging in social protests aimed at the state, though not necessarily political violence. These groups cut across ethnic lines, which in theory holds out the possibility of a broad-based mobilization but in practice, pronounced ethnic divisions make solidarity across that boundary improbable for the foreseeable future.

One final point on opportunities for mobilization - that so few areas of the country are genuinely multi-ethnic in character acts as a break on would-be mobilization for violence. Ethnic cleansing has resulted in fewer geographic flash points, although it does not take many people from a minority group to constitute an inviting target for determined troublemakers. This is not to trumpet the virtues of homogenous communities, only to observe that one outcome of forced dislocation is fewer instances of war-time antagonists in close proximity. Where towns and cities retain a considerable measure of their multi-ethnic past, tensions seem to be more pronounced as the previous antagonists vie for political control, though seldom have much meaningful interaction across the ethnic divide.

## IV. STATE AND SOCIAL CAPACITY AND RESPONSE

Arrayed against would-be mobilized groups with strong motivating grievances or opportunities to use violence as well as access to resources are state and non-governmental social institutions that either facilitate conflict or form a bulwark against the onset of widespread violence. Capable institutions like those found in most established and some nascent democracies generally have a number of tools at their disposal to address the root causes of conflict and to respond effectively to threats of political violence. These tools include financial and other means to address incentives for violence by blocking access to conflict resources by groups intent on engaging in violence and constraining opportunistic elite behavior. Democratic systems tend to enjoy greater legitimacy and public confidence while channeling grievances and political contestation in constructive and peaceful ways. A well-developed civil society likewise reduces violent conflict by giving groups with grievances a voice and a stake in the conventional political process. CSOs also can play a critical role in moving a country to examine the underlying causes of social tension and the risks of conflict. An independent, vibrant and unfettered press that provides accurate information widely across society is another essential component of a solid democratic system well equipped to combat many of the drivers of conflict.

State and social institutions can work to ameliorate, exacerbate or ignore conditions that render a country vulnerable to violence. They can address grievances and be responsive to the needs of citizens, or they can fuel discontent through repression, poor governance, corruption, and inefficiency. They can block access to conflict resources by crafting policies that limit the flow of arms or devise economic policies and programs that target potential recruits. In some cases, state institutions contribute to conflict directly by providing resources to groups carrying out violence (e.g. governments that arm paramilitary forces). Perhaps most importantly, state and social institutions can either constrain the behavior of opportunistic elites that see violence as an efficacious strategy for gaining power and wealth, or they can create the conditions that retard their emergence, appeal, and room for maneuver.

### A. State capacity

A new democracy with weak governing institutions, Bosnia-Herzegovina is more susceptible to conflict than established democratic polities. It must consolidate political authority and erect capable institutions

in a polarized post-conflict environment under conditions of limited sovereignty imposed by the international community. BiH also must contend with unrealistically high expectations about the advent of economic prosperity and entrenched elites hostile to reform that would reduce their power.

State building in the wake of the Dayton Accords has proven a formidable task. BiH has only recently been able to create its first truly national institutions. A unified military is generally viewed as a prerequisite for safeguarding territorial integrity and preserving domestic tranquility by deterring illegal resort to force by aggrieved or opportunistic political actors. Lacking the full panoply of effective national governing institutions puts BiH at a disadvantage in trying to cope with the challenges of a deeply divided society. While some state structures and institutions are growing stronger (e.g., the Communications Regulatory Agency, the judiciary and the Election Commission), they do not have a track record of responding to violence or social conflict without the support of a heavy-handed international community.

BiH's complex institutional arrangements also rob the country of a potential asset in dealing with the persisting conditions that could lead to political violence. The Dayton Accords have ended hostilities but are an enormous impediment to erecting a state apparatus capable of governing a unitary state. Establishment of the two entities --RS and the Federation-- all but ensures that BiH state institutions will be relatively weak. The lack of an effective central authority diminishes the prospects for social cohesion across the ethnic and religious divide and for compromise to improve governance at the national level.

Two entities within a single country weakens nascent state institutions that ordinarily would be more proactive in attending to potential threats to civil order - but attempting to alter the Dayton arrangements carries a considerable risk. Republika Srpska political leaders are not going to countenance change that would threaten the existence of this de facto ethnic Serb homeland. At the same time, recent political developments, such as the establishment (as least on paper) of state level institutions for Intelligence, Banking and Energy, as well as for the Ministry of Defense, show that some compromise and forward movement is possible with the current cast of political leaders. However, if Dayton is reassessed and renegotiated, autonomy of many state functions that the RS government now controls will remain points of controversy. In contrast, majority Bosniaks predictably favor strengthening state institutions at the expense of entity governing structures while Croats hold fast in support of cantons as the most advantageous organizing scheme for the Federation. In short, two of the country's three key communities have little incentive to invest in national structures that undermine or replace entity-level institutions.

Yet the status quo is hardly sustainable. The country's extraordinarily bulky administrative structure consumes such a high percentage of the country's overall budget that the state is left with inadequate resources to provide public goods – including to carry out programs explicitly designed to address potential drivers of conflict. Military forces loyal to the state cannot be said to reliably control the national territory and still lax enforcement at the borders permits trafficking that brings a continual flow of contraband (including weapons) and further erodes respect for the rule of law and citizens' already low level of confidence in public institutions.

State capacity to prevent and/or mitigate violent conflict in BiH is not just a function of capable national or even entity-level institutions. Local government also has a potentially significant role to play. Enlightened leadership by local officials to address festering grievances and conditions that are correlated with political violence is not an adequate substitute for comparable action at the national level but it can definitely provide part of the foundation for peace and stability.

Because the Assessment Team found the probability of politically incited violence – or at least violence that is manipulated by ethnically based political actors -- to be considerably higher on the local rather than the national level, it focused much of its analytical attention on municipal governments (as well as non-governmental community leaders and activists). Local officials are in many respects the frontline decision makers that have to deal with the realities of inter-ethnic tensions, high rates of youth

unemployment and other conditions correlated with the risk of violence. Thankfully, despite ongoing ethnic tensions, thus far little to no politically motivated violence has erupted in BiH. However, mayors need to be better prepared to deal with tensions in ways that avoid outbreaks of violence.

BiH municipal governments vary widely with respect to their level of awareness of conflict vulnerability. Even where mayors and other public servants are sensitive to destabilizing dynamics in their municipalities, they do not always have the requisite expertise or institutional capacity to respond effectively. More promisingly, in some of the cities that the Team visited, such as Bihac and Trebinje, newly-elected mayors who unseated hard-line and inept (and probably corrupt) administrations are saying and doing things to garner public confidence, including that of minorities that suffered grievously during the war and have largely been second class citizens in the years following. They appear to have a more inclusive view of politics, a fairly sophisticated understanding of the importance of symbols, and recognize the need for ethnic reconciliation, albeit mostly indirectly through local economic development. A greater openness to working with CSOs and citizen groups also bodes well for the ability of these new mayors to tap into the considerable human resource base of organizations and individuals involved in different dimensions of conflict prevention work.

## **B. Social capacity**

With respect to the capacity of social institutions to prevent and mitigate violent conflict, BiH may have stabilized and moved from a post-conflict to a transition country according to the World Bank, but in many ways it is still contending with the after affects of four years of bloody warfare. A divided society with limited social cohesion, BiH has yet to develop the degree of indigenous social capital –capacity and willingness of citizens to come together to solve common problems-- needed to help fend off violent conflict even with extensive involvement by the international community. Places with readily available social capital have more open discussions about social tensions that roil under the surface and community, NGO, media, government and police leaders fully understand the roles that each would play in the case of violence or the first signs of extreme social unrest, especially at the local level which is more in touch with the people and can disseminate messages fastest.

For it's part, the Assessment Team's examination of non-state actors focused principally on (CSOs engaged in various aspects of conflict prevention and peace building. These efforts range from documenting and truth telling in order to try to compel the country to confront honestly what happened in the run up to and during the war years, to promoting healing and reconciliation through inter-communal dialogue (e.g. Nansen Centers). While these and other groups are carrying out important and often well-designed activities --based on the Team's admittedly cursory review through interviews and studying various materials-- they are not reaching much of the population and certainly not the high-risk populations, such as unemployed young men. Even taken collectively, CSOs are not having appreciable national-level impact. Making this task more difficult is the citizenry's residual mistrust of civil society, which may be more pronounced in the case of human rights and watchdog groups funded by Western donors.

Notwithstanding generous support from foreign donors, CSOs have relatively little influence in shaping public policy either directly by pressuring or persuading decisionmakers to pursue a particular course or indirectly by altering public attitudes that in turn affect the thinking of executive branch officials or political party and religious community leaders. An earlier civil society assessment conducted for the Mission explored some of the reasons for the sector's limited influence. Most are not unique to the Third Sector in BiH and include: poor organization, lack of strategic planning and coalition building, inability to reach out to would-be constituents, popular cynicism and apathy etc. Suffice to say here that a more effective core group of CSOs working in the area of conflict prevention and peace building would be an

important addition to the capacity of the non-state sector to avert violence on a national as well as a local scale.

The picture is both more and less encouraging at the local level. Although the most effective CSOs tend to be concentrated in Sarajevo, the Assessment Team can attest to a number of impressive groups in municipalities in different parts of the country. More modest in ambition than their capital-based counterparts, the best of these groups seek to raise public awareness of issues around ethnic division, promote inter-communal understanding, champion policy priorities that address relevant social problems etc. Some of these groups have proven skilled lobbyists with local government officials and savvy actors in dealing with the media.

The picture is decidedly less encouraging in many towns and cities where CSOs and citizen groups concerned about issues related to conflict prevention either don't exist or are so marginalized that they command little attention. Some of these municipalities are homogenous enclaves where there is a dearth of interest in examining such issues. Others are ethnically mixed but highly segregated where the efforts of civil society activists bring scorn and social ostracism. Needless to say, groups in these locales can feel isolated and often do not have access to donor resources and networking opportunities enjoyed by organizations in Sarajevo and the main secondary cities.

### C. Media

Media is another pivotal component of the civil society equation in preventing violent conflict. Whether the airwaves and printing presses are used to spread fear and reinforce ugly stereotypes or to support values of tolerance and pluralism can alter political outcomes. The role of the media in inciting inter-communal conflict in BiH in the 1990s is well documented. Control of broadcast and to a lesser extent print media proved to be among the most powerful weapons in the arsenal of leaders intent on plunging the country into violence. The central question confronting the Assessment Team is whether anything has changed to ensure the media does not become an instrument by which extremist forces sew the seeds of fear, intolerance and conflict.

Here too, a separate, full-fledged media assessment has been carried out by another team of experts so we confine ourselves to some observations based on a relatively small number of interviews with journalists and others knowledgeable about the subject and focusing more narrowly on the issue of conflict. Most of the journalists with whom we met were acutely aware of the role media had played in Bosnia-Herzegovina's tragic past and expressed a determination to help professionalize the trade and to resist any efforts to manipulate TV, radio and print media to make it a vehicle for fomenting conflict. However, by their own admission, our interviewees do not constitute a representative sample of their journalistic colleagues so that there is every reason to continue to monitor closely the content of broadcast and print media and to support programs to bolster responsible independent media (see recommendations section).

Precisely because the media was such an infamous part of the story of the ethnic violence that beset BiH, the Office of the High Representative has been very active in ensuring that the airwaves not contain material designed to inflame and incite inter-ethnic tensions. Ethnic stereotyping and similar efforts to aggravate ethnic and other divisions are not permitted in TV programming and according to most people with whom we spoke, seldom find their way to viewers. This is a significant development given that TV is the paramount source of news and information for BiH citizens.

It is also the case that residents of BiH receive TV and radio programming from neighboring countries, which are far less sensitive to and have less incentive to curb potentially divisive content. It is widely observed that residents of the RS are much more aware of developments in Serbia than in the wider BiH. Information gleaned from Serbian TV will not bridge knowledge gaps or expose RS consumers to a range

of viewpoints and alternative ways of understanding past and present events in the region. It is far more apt to reinforce existing biases and preconceptions. The same is undoubtedly true for the ethnic Croat population of the Federation vis-à-vis their access to broadcasts from Croatia. True, politics in Belgrade and Zagreb is becoming much less virulent but is still characterized by strong ethnic-based nationalism and an insular worldview that won't contribute anything positive to ameliorating tensions in BiH.

The absence of ethnically divisive television programming is to be applauded but the medium is not nearly the force it could be in actively promoting the images and values of a new BiH. There is disappointingly little programming on facing the past or encouraging inter-ethnic tolerance and dialogue in a country with a body politic rife with fissures. Such content is all the more important in light of the oft-commented upon existence of divergent narratives to explain what transpired (and why) in the 1990s and the resulting de facto segregation of schools that minimizes interactions of young people across the ethnic divide.

With respect to print media, the picture is both more and less encouraging than with TV. The changed political system and accompanying array of publications of varying viewpoints renders the sector much less susceptible to control by a single demagogic leader or group capable of imposing his/her/its outlook and manipulating the general public to foment ethnic and religious-based violence. The level of professionalism in the field leaves a great deal to be desired but the sheer range of opinion itself provides part of the defense against the type of nightmare that unfolded in the early to mid 1990s. And there are some responsible and substantively solid daily and weekly papers and magazines that perform the critical function of helping to inform the citizenry, including exposing their readers to news and views that challenge the prevailing thinking.

On the other hand, most publications tend to be parochial and polemical, filled with stories that fortify ethnic cleavages and make a mockery of any sense of responsibility to heal divisions and encourage citizens to think in new ways about the future of BiH. Whether due to ideology or a desire to sell papers, and probably both, newspapers feature articles that perpetuate division, principally along ethnic lines and generally paint a picture of a hostile climate where trust would be folly. Far too few publishers and journalists exhibit interest in informing their readers, critically assessing the goals and tactics of nationalist political forces or in playing a role to boost social cohesion, improve governance (e.g. by exposing corruption) etc. Even were they predisposed in that direction, many journalists engage in self-censorship, fearful of the consequences of exposing certain wrongdoing or criticizing demagogic political leaders whose privileged positions would be undermined by ethnic reconciliation and cooperation.

Unlike in the area of television, the Office of the High Representative does not exercise authority over the content of print media. The merits of such oversight in a country laying claim to democratic processes is a matter of debate but it is a statement of fact that print media remains a sphere where disinformation and divisive content is commonplace.

The Assessment Team would be seriously remiss if it failed to mention that it did meet with some courageous journalists who at great personal risk authored stories about the political maneuverings of religious leaders, links between organized crime and political parties, governmental corruption, harboring of war criminals, and about atrocities committed by the various sides during the war. They also make a special effort to report on initiatives by citizens, especially CSOs, to promote healing and dialogue.

One newspaper in Banja Luka has been vilified and its editor become the object of death threats by nationalist-minded ethnic Serbs for publishing articles about the massacres in Srebrenica and running editorials on the obligation of the RS government to acknowledge responsibility. The publisher and owner of Dani has also been the recipient of death threats and more recently the publication was the target of a boycott called by an influential Muslim cleric in response to an article documenting his ties to a hard-line

political party. These brave men and women face an uphill battle, as there are many influential actors for whom a responsible, independent press is anathema.

## **D. Bosnia-Herzegovina national institutions**

The establishment of truly national institutions with authority trumping those of the two entities is widely seen as pivotal to the emergence of a stable and prosperous BiH. The challenge for indigenous state-builders and their international allies is to ensure that these all-BiH institutions are effective in carrying out their responsibilities while also retaining a political system that grants the RS and the Federation sufficient autonomy to preserve domestic tranquility. Standing up capable institutions that command legitimacy and trust from the entire citizenry is a long-term process under the most auspicious of situations, which BiH is assuredly not. The political-administrative structure put in place based on the Dayton Accords favored the formation of entity-level rather than national institutions. Present day decisionmakers confront the reality that only the Bosniak population is eager to see the emergence of all-BiH institutions that supplant or at least begin to take on some of the responsibility and authority now invested in entity-level and cantonal administrative structures. Although Croats advocate a stronger state, they would be hesitant to give any ground on the power that they retain through the cantons. While the country and the international community sort out possible constitutional issues, as mentioned briefly above, there has been some movement in the balance between entity-level and national institutions.

Unification of the military, while far from complete (as evidenced by the existence of two, entity-level Ministries of Defense), marks a promising start in erecting national institutions in a country not that far removed from major conflict. A similar move involving intelligence apparatuses is also a welcome step. The Team was not in position to examine the success of this process but would point out that military and intelligence are two especially challenging areas, meaning that forward progress augers well for establishing all-BiH institutions across a wider spectrum.

Ultimately, well-functioning national institutions hold out the best hope for helping to heal the country's wounds by supporting an accurate accounting of the recent past, dispensing justice for those who committed crimes and promoting a process of ethnic reconciliation and cooperation in moving the country forward. Forging an inclusive BiH identity among citizens, an important benchmark on the way to ameliorating the conditions that could give rise to violent conflict, is probably not possible in the absence of effective national governing institutions. The same applies to amplifying and aggregating the impact of conflict mitigation/peace building efforts underway in various municipalities. It won't happen without proactive national institutions.

## **E. International community presence in Bosnia-Herzegovina**

This report has made frequent reference to the fact that the international community (IC) plays a significant and perhaps decisive role in preventing violent conflict from reigniting. From the deployment of a multi-national armed peacekeeping force and the activities of the High Representative to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR) and an array of bilateral and multi-lateral donors, the IC has been instrumental in boosting the capacity of state and non-governmental institutions to deal more effectively with the constellation of conditions that could give rise to violent conflict. Peacekeepers provide a real and psychological security zone that frees BiH citizens of the fear that civil strife could occur at any time, allowing them to get on with the business of rebuilding their country. Without that sense of security, people would be disinclined to commit the requisite time and energy to create a new Bosnia-Herzegovina. The transition from SFOR to EUFOR appears to have gone very smoothly, though it must be noted that the majority of people with whom the Assessment Team met

expressed apprehension over the expanded role of the Europeans and the corresponding reduced role for U.S. forces.

In addition to helping to establish new all-state institutions such as the military and intelligence services, the IC, including the U.S. Government, has dedicated generous resources to assist civil society in its efforts to strengthen democratic rule and combat the onset of deadly conflict. There are legitimate questions about the influence and sustainability of the non-governmental sector but the reality remains that donors have recognized that civil society must be a full and effective partner to ensure national stability and give the country every chance of evolving into a flourishing free-market democracy.

The **Office of the High Representative** (OHR) has been a dominant actor in Bosnia Herzegovina's post-war evolution. For the most part, the present High Representative, British politician Paddy Ashdown, is credited with successfully navigating the complex political terrain that emerged from the Dayton Accords. He has demonstrated a steady if occasionally heavy hand in balancing competing imperatives of hastening the country's democratic transition (as well as the onset of full sovereignty) and preventing violent conflict. Ashdown and his staff have a formidable task in part because many of the country's political leaders engage in irresponsible, provocative behavior cocksure that the international community in the form of OHR (and SFOR/EUFOR) will contain any resulting damage.

With the OHR presence drawing down significantly, Ashdown faces the dilemma of needing and wanting to transfer ever increasing ownership over BiH's evolution to the country's political leadership but at the same time ensuring that those in positions of decision-making authority uphold the provisions and principles of the Dayton Accords and stable democracy more generally. There is legitimate concern in some quarters that Ashdown's recent dismissal of several senior SDS political figures comes too late, that the time for such invasive interventions was in OHR's early years. There is little chance that this heavy-handed approach will touch off violence with the ethnic Serb community but it will reinforce in their minds the destabilizing conviction that the international community remains unalterably hostile to their concerns and wellbeing.

To citizens of BiH, heavily armed **peacekeeping forces** are the single most important manifestation of the international community's commitment to a peaceful evolution of the country. As stated repeatedly in this report, the people of BiH believe fervently that the presence of the troops ensures there will be no replay of the violence that convulsed the country and further that they will remain on BiH soil for some time to come. It is worth noting that this belief in the peacekeeping forces as the key to maintaining stability must be a type of psychological band-aid, given the fact that the troop numbers have dropped from 60,000 to 7,000 in the last few years. While this perception is important, the troops and the population know that they are no longer standing between parties that are on the verge of open warfare.

European Union troops took over the peacekeeping mandate from SFOR in early December 2004. In practice, this transition appears to have been immaterial to stability. The transition was advertised widely to the population, with billboards depicting a seamless transition pictorially all across the country. The Team was not in position to determine the ease with which leadership of the peacekeeping mission changed hands but the general sense around headquarters was quite positive. For the public, the mechanics of the transition and the reality of EUFOR's ample capability matter far less than the general lack of confidence citizens have in European institutions. In the end, it is extremely improbable that this less favorable perception will have much of an impact insofar as raising the risk of armed conflict in BiH.

The Team cannot conceive of a plausible near-term scenario in which any of the three communities or other possible perpetrators of conflict would conclude that EUFOR is not up to the task and hence that initiating violence is a strategy worth pursuing. The peacekeeping contingent remains a potent deterrent to would-be spoilers and a powerful ongoing demonstration that the rest of Europe is unalterably committed to a stable, democratic and prosperous BiH. Because EUFOR will not command as much respect as



SFOR (at least not initially), the former would be well advised to make a more concerted effort to win the trust and confidence of the population.

That the people of BiH rely too heavily on the peacekeeping forces to prevent a possible recurrence of civil strife (rather than doing the difficult, painful work of addressing the hypothesized causes of conflict) does not negate the soundness of their judgment that the troops are not going away any time soon. Whether it's SFOR or EUFOR, neither Washington nor the Western European capitals are going to allow a repeat of the warfare that engulfed the Balkans. For their part, conflict analysts are justifiably dismayed by arguments that the possibility of large-scale violent conflict is remote simply because of the presence of SFOR/EUFOR since these specialists see a number of permissive conditions and factors that are strongly correlated with political violence. But it remains the case that Western forces stationed in BiH (and the deployment of additional forces should circumstances warrant) all but preclude violence on the scale that convulsed the region more than a decade ago.

That citizens resolutely believe war is all but impossible with deployment of foreign peacekeeping forces is a positive development insofar as it may lead them to embrace a confident, optimistic vision of the future and invest time and energy into building a new Bosnia-Herzegovina. But such a belief can also constitute denial with the corresponding risk of complacency. It is hoped that with this report the Assessment Team will contribute in some small way to counter-acting the proclivity of BiH citizens, political leaders and parts of the international community to downplay or ignore altogether persisting cleavages and conditions that make violent conflict, at least at the local level, a reasonable possibility.

## V. REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL DIMENSION

Regional factors loomed large in instigating and sustaining the 1992-95 conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in influencing the dynamics of the post-war recovery period since the signing of the Dayton Peace Accords. Serbian and Croatian politics and military forces played a pivotal role in the conflict. Any sound analysis of the prospects for future violence must take into account the interests and involvement of BiH's neighbors and of the international community writ large.

### A. Changing attitudes in Belgrade and Zagreb

Neighboring authoritarian regimes and a variety of nationalist opportunists and war-profiteering actors bear enormous responsibility for plunging Bosnia-Herzegovina into war. Both Franjo Tudjman and Slobodan Milosevic pursued policies that fomented, supported and financed the bloody conflict. In the years following the cessation of hostilities, Zagreb and Belgrade seemed determined to undermine the establishment of a unified state in BiH. More recently, however, developments in both capitals are altering the political landscape and calculus such that the new leaderships in both countries have a demonstrable interest in being seen as playing a constructive role in building a stable BiH. This is an important and welcome change given that Serbia and Croatia retain considerable influence in BiH politics – at least what they say and do tend to interest both the respective ethnic populations and the politicians. At a minimum, both have suggestive power with their “sister” political parties (SDS and HDZ) in ways that can hamper state building efforts and increase inter-ethnic tensions.

The driving force behind this discernible shift has a great deal to do with broader political trends on the European continent, most notably the possibility of accession to the European Union. The lure of membership has diverted the attention of most of the governing elite in both Serbia and Croatia away

from efforts to shape politics in BiH toward influencing decision-makers in Brussels. This reorientation is bolstered by changing attitudes among the electorates in BiH's neighbors where even nationalist parties support integration into European structures -- fueled mainly by dreams, however unrealistic, of near-term economic prosperity. (A similar dynamic is operating within Bosnia-Herzegovina itself, especially with respect to pressure on the Republika Srpska to hand over Hague Tribunal-indicted war criminals. Half-hearted efforts by the RS political leadership have been a major obstacle to the country's membership in the EU.) . In short, the cost-benefit calculation surrounding Serbia's and Croatia's overt meddling in BiH has undergone an abrupt change, though to be sure Zagreb's and Belgrade's interests will continue to be looked after by their "sister" political parties in BiH.

Also with dense links between the two countries and BiH, there is every reason to think that the political situation in Zagreb and Belgrade will continue to affect the evolution of BiH. The fact that ethnic Serbs and Croats in BiH can hold dual passports, often have studied at the main university in Belgrade or Zagreb, have family either from Serbia or Croatia or relatives that settled in these countries during the war, maintain economic ties to these countries and have an emotional connection to them that was intensified during the war – all means that the fates of the three countries are inextricably intertwined. The prize of EU membership could well have the sought after moderating impact on political elite behavior in all three countries – if the prospects of membership appear attainable at some point in the near to medium future. Current European dynamics have weakened the perception that the EU is willing to welcome new members in the near future.

## **B. Ongoing allure of cross-border organized crime**

A common outcome of war is that organized crime groups manage to carve out deep and controlling niches for themselves in economic and political spheres. Unfortunately, the political instability of the 1990s in the western Balkans has enabled a complex network of transnational criminal activity to flourish. BiH, Croatia, and Serbia and Montenegro are all home to wealthy, well-connected criminal networks. On a cross-border basis, these networks traffic in everything from people to weapons to drugs. Within Bosnia and Herzegovina, these networks enjoy close links with the dominant nationalist parties and large, state-owned industries such as telecommunications, energy and wood processing/forestry. Donor-funded efforts have begun to reduce corruption, strengthen State Border Police, increase the capacity of customs officials and weaken the hold of criminals in these areas but there is a long way to go.

Perhaps more disturbingly, the Team was told that economically successful war profiteers and traffickers have become role models for many members of the younger generation, which suffers from high unemployment and few prospects for upward mobility. The young men provide willing recruits for criminal networks while BiH women increasingly are among those trafficked in the international underground sex trade.

The interests of transnational criminal networks in financing nationalist political parties and generally ensuring the absence of a rule of law state that allows them to prosper remain a potential source of violent conflict. These actors probably lack the ability to foment state-wide conflict as long as the IC and peacekeeping troops remain but the chances of localized violence cannot be dismissed. Reformed state authorities might seek to curb the illegal activities setting off violent confrontations or a new generation of would-be transnational criminals could move aggressively to secure a portion of the spoils of illegal cross-border activity. Either way, the possibility of escalation is probably low since the violence would not necessarily track along ethnic lines. Where the danger of wider violence does loom is in a chronic environment of lawlessness and corruption that threatens to turn Bosnia-Herzegovina into a failed state. While, there is probably a contingent of former and aspiring war profiteers who might welcome renewed armed conflict as good for business, the trend seems to be such people rapidly trying to legitimize their ill-gotten gains.

## C. Kosovo final status and other possible external triggers to violence

Kosovo has long been considered a powder keg for the western Balkans. We have seen events in Kosovo dominate political agendas in Serbia and spill over into neighboring countries such as Macedonia. How a decision of the final status in Kosovo might affect the situation in Bosnia remains an open question. Hard-line nationalists in the eastern Republika Srpska adopt an alarmist stance at least in discussions with outside analysts. They offered a scenario in which a move by the international community to grant independence to Kosovo would fuel a violent reaction in the RS, which, they claim, will likewise demand the freedom to determine its own fate – possibly to join with Serbia.

In the judgment of the Assessment Team, this scenario is contradicted by several instances when dismal predictions did not come to pass. There have been a number of events and incidents, mostly involving the RS, which found knowledgeable observers forecasting outbreaks of violence in response to developments that were seen as highly provocative by ethnic Serbs. When High Representative Paddy Ashdown sacked several nationalist political party leaders there was significant carping about overstepping his reach and the unfairness of singling out Serbs but no violent resistance. In another example, when violence broke out in Kosovo in March 2004, Serbs in Banja Luka called for a public demonstration of solidarity with their ethnic brethren in the Serbian province. Violence was widely predicted. But the protest took the form of a prayerful candlelight vigil, an outcome that had much more to do with the approach of the organizers than with the large number of SFOR troops and local police mobilized on city street corners.

Furthermore, local police have shown an ability to deal adroitly with local violence, such as when, during the laying of a foundation stone for the reconstruction of the old mosque in the center of Banja Luka, Serb youth gangs stoned people participating in the ceremony and lit cars on fire. Although SFOR stood ready to respond to a call for help from local police, the latter got the situation under control and arrested some of the perpetrators. The willingness and ability of the police to handle such situations increases public confidence in that institution and bodes well for improved crisis mitigation interventions at the local level as police forces become more professionalized.

When thinking about the possible impact of events in Kosovo and/or Serbia on political dynamics in the Republika Srpska, it's important to recognize that the RS is not a completely self-contained part of BiH. The Assessment Team was surprised to learn, for example, that towns in the southern most reaches of the of the entity are more closely tied economically to Herzegovina than to other parts of the RS or to near-by Serbia. It is difficult to imagine local political leaders in this part of the RS following orders from their bosses in Banja Luka (or in Pale) to instigate or endorse separatist violence. In actuality, across the RS there is grudging acceptance of remaining part of BiH and fewer and fewer public figures advocate independence or union with Serbia. Recent reforms that have begun to whittle away some of the power of entity level institutions have not been met with significant resistance.

This does not mean that the conditions for resistance and violence are not present in the RS. Leaders of the Serb community are under immense international pressure to turn over indicted war criminals, most notoriously, Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic, while also contending with a diminution of authority in key institutions/issue areas including the judiciary, Ministry of Defense, police, intelligence agencies, and taxes/VAT. It behooves the international community to continue to monitor the political temperature in the RS as these trends accelerate and as the final status of Kosovo is decided.

## **D. Mitigating factor of European Union aspirations**

As in Serbia and Croatia, Bosnian public opinion heavily favors a path towards eventual membership in the European Union. Though the public may only be expressing a desire for a better standard of living, the importance of this common aspiration of EU membership should not be underestimated. At the moment, the main functional argument for reform that strengthens the BiH state is the need to create conditions that will satisfy the strict standards and requirements of the EU. The prospect of EU accession could serve as the key to getting all the country's political parties to the negotiating table.

Some BiH politicians contend that Western failure to find a place in the EU for Bosnia and other Balkan countries would have a devastating impact and leave citizens in these countries angry, disillusioned and primed for violence in the foreseeable future.

The RS may be particularly prone to building frustrations, as residents in some cities find themselves shut out by everyone – including under U.S. sanctions stemming from the Lautenberg Amendment, which aims to isolate communities that harbor and/or support war criminals and block minority return. In the RS, some towns under sanctions do not really understand the reason for their pariah status, since they feel that they did put effort into permitting minority returns – unfortunately, it is the politicians who are not sharing the reasoning in an effort to maintain their own popularity. All of this simply indicates a greater vulnerability of the RS.

The threat of violence accompanying a long delay or outright rejection of BiH membership may not be as pronounced as portrayed by EU supporters but almost all agree that the lure of EU accession can be instrumental in driving domestic reform and establishing a secure and stable future for Bosnia-Herzegovina. As elsewhere across Europe's formerly communist countries, citizens need to be educated about the anticipated benefits and the necessary sacrifices surrounding EU integration so as to generate reasonable expectations. They need to understand that membership is not automatic, that the country will have to make significant progress towards economic reform and democratic consolidation.

## **E. U.S. Security blanket**

Ordinary citizens, journalists and politicians around the country expressed similar fears about declining U.S. engagement in Bosnia-Herzegovina, citing the hand-off from SFOR to EUFOR as a symbol of diminishing commitment. Justified or not, our interlocutors voiced a lack of confidence in European leaders and institutions --even as they simultaneously enthusiastically endorsed European Union membership-- in what amounts to indirect recognition on the part of BiH citizens that the chances of conflict have not disappeared. Assuming interviewees were not simply trying to flatter a team comprised mainly of Americans, we feel confident in saying that continued U.S. involvement even at a modest level, will have an important psychological impact on the country's residents, giving the U.S. a degree of influence in shaping the BiH's political evolution, including on inter-ethnic reconciliation. Interesting, the sentiments about a continued U.S. presence were also expressed in the RS, where there is no great affinity for Washington. It's possible that the thinking in Banja Luka may be that the USG is better equipped than the Europeans to rein in what is viewed as a Bosniak-dominated government in Sarajevo.

## VI. KEY FINDINGS

### A decade of progress

A decade of foreign assistance to Bosnia and Herzegovina has helped bring about a dramatic improvement in socio-economic and political conditions. One of the most encouraging developments is the obvious change in public expectations regarding conflict. A more hopeful view of the future in a region long accustomed to worst-case scenario thinking is no small matter and a prerequisite for people to invest their time, energy and resources in improving their own lives and the communities where they live.

Even a few years ago, residents would have been much quicker to predict a possible recurrence of widespread violent conflict. Many factors have influenced this change in public attitudes. They include the demonstrated commitment of the international community, increased freedom of movement across entity borders and throughout the country (due in no small measure to the simple idea of national rather than non-geographic license plates); a more secure environment due to more professional local police/security/military; some success in demobilization and disarmament especially in Republika Srpska (although there are plenty of weapons still at large around the country); a semblance of peaceful inter-ethnic interactions at the community level and the low-level of violence surrounding the return of slightly less than 450,000 minority refugees and IDPs throughout the country.

State level governing institutions are gaining more authority, capacity and credibility in the creation of an integrated police force, military and justice system. These reforms have yet to be fully implemented but they give some reason for optimism that obstacles to building capable national institutions are not insurmountable. The foundation is being laid for national decision-making bodies and an integrated system and laws. One political/social goal that has been realized is an almost complete return of property to refugees and IDPs. While this achievement has not been matched with returns of the people themselves (many property owners chose to sell their property and settle in new areas) it still removes a potential tension-causing issue from the political/social agenda.

Many of these achievements would have been unfathomable only five years ago. These successes translate into more inter-ethnic, cross-entity interactions and a new on-the-ground stability – all of which contribute to greater public confidence in the stability of the existing order.

### Low likelihood of large-scale conflict in near to medium term

The assessment began with questions about the potential for a resumption of widespread violent conflict. Almost unanimously, Bosniaks and Serbs responded that there is little danger of broad-based conflict as long as the international community maintains its large presence politically and militarily. When asked what would happen if the international community largely departed virtually all our interlocutors responded reflexively that this would never happen. When pushed to consider what they regard as the unimaginable, they lacked confidence that peace and stability would prevail. This portion of the population spoke freely of the psychological security of having “neutral” decision-makers around to quell any violence. At the same time, they also regarded the likelihood of conflict to be low due to general weariness with war and the realization that citizens had suffered greatly with little to show for all the carnage.

Members of the Croat community share the view that conflict is unlikely to erupt but do not feel the international presence has made much difference. This is probably because SFOR has had a significantly lower profile in Herzegovina (except in cities such as Mostar) and does not seem a deterrent to residents of this part of the country. In Mostar, the deputy mayor stated that the only reason to keep international

troops in the vicinity would be to counter any potential, unexpected organized crime or terrorism in the area, citing a cache of weapons discovered a few years earlier in a warehouse with no identifiable owner.

Many well-placed members of the international community share the conviction that the likelihood of large-scale violence in the foreseeable future is small. They were, however, concerned about “buck passing” between the IC and the BiH government in responsibility and accountability for reforms. The omnipresence and authority of the international community facilitates enactment of reforms, often through arm-twisting. The resistance is not surprising but it means there is little buy-in by the indigenous political elite over the reform process. Not only can they evade responsibility but also engage in provocative behavior fanning ethnic tensions, secure in the knowledge that the IC will not permit armed conflict. In short, the forceful presence of the IC has the unintended consequence of encouraging irresponsible behavior and inflexible posturing by the political elite. Finding the right balance between preventing violence and encouraging BiH leaders and citizens alike to take ownership over the fate of their country has been a principal challenge of the OHR and other key institutions. It also underscores the co-dependent dimension of the evolving relationship between the IC and citizens.

Most of our interlocutors agreed on the need to devolve more authority to local actors. But among the major concerns is that BiH’s complex tri-partite administrative-governing structure to this point has predictably failed to institutionalize any effective consensus-building mechanisms, putting in doubt any progress on painful reform measures.

## **Possibility of local violence with the potential for broader escalation**

While the robust presence of the international community and other factors militate against a resumption of large-scale armed conflict, the possibility of local violence is ever present. There exist a combination of conditions in many areas of the country that render them vulnerable to violence even when a large majority of residents would say there is little to be gained by inciting conflict. Institutional and other capacities that exist at the national level to blunt the onset of violence are weaker or altogether absent in smaller communities, where otherwise minor incidents could trigger violence. The most likely venues are economically depressed places with tensions between ethnic groups already exists and political and religious leaders have proven unable or unwilling to play a constructive role in promoting peaceful co-existence. If violence does occur there is an inherent risk of escalation in the affected town or neighboring areas given the broader failure of BiH society to address many of the main drivers of conflict.

On a more hopeful note, the dearth of local level violence accompanying minority returnees and proactive efforts by officials and involved citizens to address conditions that make violence more likely suggests that these towns are not tinderboxes that will explode in violence with the slightest provocation. Ensuring that local officials and community leaders have the “tools” or mechanisms to address conflict-spawning tensions and to deal with crises is a prudent investment. Such tools can be provided by technical assistance through training, joint scenario planning (government, police, media, community and religious leaders), and the establishment of tested, reliable fora for disseminating information and reaching key populaces. While programs currently seek to establish such mechanisms, a stronger focus on these activities would boost the ability of local leaders to face these situations.

## **Main beneficiaries of war still dominate the BiH politics and economy**

Many of the same conflict entrepreneurs that fueled and benefited from the war dominate the political and economic scene at the national, entity and local levels. The main nationalist political parties that bear part of the responsibility for the conflict are entrenched and have close ties to the managers of state-owned companies and organized crime. As long as the same people who perpetrated the violence and turned it to

their advantage dominate public policy, political and economic reform will find little traction, and transitional justice and inter-ethnic reconciliation will make marginal headway.

Up to now, the international community has taken on the issue of corruption and organized crime through uneven attempts to clean out old management and push through stricter laws against wrongdoing. But the hegemonic control of these illegitimate and self-interested elites renders unlikely the establishment of the rule of law, the necessary foundation for the country's political and economic advancement. And as long as citizens see the principal culprits are largely immune from punishment, they have little incentive to take risks to reform corrupt institutions.

## Failure to confront the past

Bosnia-Herzegovina has made little progress in coming to terms with the conflict and its legacy that continues to shape the country's evolution in deleterious ways. The experience of many other countries that have suffered through domestic upheaval of the ferocity and magnitude of BiH's is that the resulting cleavages not only render the country more susceptible to a recurrence of violence but also are a brake on political and socio-economic development. Confronting the past is an indispensable first step toward justice and reconciliation, the building blocks of establishing social cohesion, trust and tolerance. Failure to do so allows grievances to fester and intensify, and to be passed from generation to generation. Serious social divisions seldom heal simply with the passage of time. In BiH, contradictory narratives live side by side. Each community tells of the suffering of its own people but is oblivious to or dismissive of the pain inflicted on others. Each ethnic group is quick to blame others while exonerating itself and all seek to claim a monopoly on victimhood. The segregated nature of the country presents few opportunities for meaningful interaction that would help to humanize each group in the eyes of the others. To most conflict experts, dehumanization is one of the common features of ethnic-based violence.

BiH's collective inability and/or unwillingness to face the past in order to gain a deeper understanding of what happened and why so as to overcome the war's harmful legacy manifests itself in numerous ways. From CSOs and publications that are vilified for trying to make the country's recent civil strife a subject of public discussion to the continued dominance of ethnic-based nationalist political parties and profound mistrust across the ethnic divide, the citizens of BiH are having to contend with an array of adverse consequences rooted in the violent conflict that engulfed the Balkans. At a minimum, BiH will not be able to count on integration into pan-European structures to accelerate national development without coming to terms with the past -- at least to the extent of turning over indicted war criminals to The Hague.

Attempting to deal with a deadly past has its own challenges and risks but they are preferable to allowing fissures to persist in the hope they will narrow and disappear as the violence recedes further in the past. Without popular pressure from below the present crop of political and religious leaders is highly unlikely to summon the requisite courage to preside over an unbiased accounting of the past. There does not appear to be popular support to embark on this process.

At the local level there is little dialogue about the war even where there are programs designed to bring together members of different ethnic groups to work on community problems. More surprisingly, intra-communal discussion is also impoverished. In those municipalities where meaningful inter-ethnic dialogue has occurred the participants tend to be individuals who are already committed to a pluralist vision of BiH and are least likely to engage in violence. Those that might be the most prone generally do not take part. Efforts to reach out to would-be spoilers are rare.

## Lack of accountability and justice for perpetrators of war and other crimes

The most telling expression of the failure to face the past is that perpetrators of war-time atrocities still live respectable lives in various communities. It is also the single most vivid demonstration of the absence of the rule of law. The dearth of transitional justice inspires no confidence in governing institutions and prevents divisive social wounds from healing. Most of the Assessment Team's interlocutors spoke to the importance of bringing war criminals to justice for individuals, communities and the entire country to move beyond the events of the 1990s. To the typical citizen this includes the need to hold accountable some of the ordinary, every-day war criminals, especially those who still occupy official positions at the local level (e.g. elected officials, police officers etc.). There is ample evidence to suggest that fears that arresting these people would spark violence are largely misplaced. Failure to bring to justice those who break the law, whether related to war atrocities or corruption, creates a culture of impunity that can consign an entire society to dysfunction and even disintegration.

## Need for constitutional reform

Across the country there is a broad consensus that the Dayton-mandated structures are outdated. The Accords served their purpose in bringing hostilities to a close but they did not produce an institutional framework up to the formidable task of governing a unitary state. Unfortunately, there is no consensus on next steps to create a genuine constitution for this purpose. The present political architecture is not only incongruent with the goal of building effective national institutions (seen as necessary for the country's long term stability), it is also unwieldy and prohibitively expensive.

The principal beneficiaries of present arrangements are the Serbs, who have got a de facto autonomous homeland but are nevertheless feel like victims and losers in the new Bosnia & Herzegovina. Ethnic Croats claim to be second-class citizens inside the Federation while Bosniaks are desperate to hold together a country that doesn't seem to want to include them. Because the Serbs and Croats have a clear interest in maintaining as much autonomy as possible from a State that they see as dominated by Bosniaks (Muslims), it will be very difficult to alter in any significant way the autonomy granted to Serbs and Croats in the form of the RS and cantons in the Federation, respectively.

The present multi-tiered and multi-entity administrative structure is probably not sustainable politically; it is certainly not sustainable financially -- especially given the comparatively poor tax collection system that has left state coffers perpetually short of funds. The elaborate governing framework also is contrary to the needs of efficient decision-making. Citizens feel the burden of this dysfunctional structure and they understand it inhibits forward progress on erecting a prosperous and stable country. Most appear to realize that the "Dayton Constitution" needs to be overhauled, but they are wary of the implications and consequences. Moreover, it will be exceedingly difficult to do this in the absence of a common vision about what kind of country BiH should be. Fundamental questions about a unitary state versus an entity-dominant one remain unanswered. Does multi-ethnic imply integrated or simply that three communities inhabit the BiH territory living largely in homogeneous towns and cities.

This dialogue is embryonic and is more advanced in the Federation than in the Republika Srpska, where the political leadership is much more inclined to endorse the status quo, fearful that any constitutional change will work to their disadvantage. As funding from the international community decreases, the financial burden of the present arrangement will become all the more onerous but may also compel a constructive national conversation and subsequent negotiation about institutions better suited to the task of modern day nation building. The invariably long process must involve citizens in a serious way if it is to have legitimacy and staying power. The carrot of EU accession can help enormously, especially in



encouraging changes required for membership, but will not by itself provide sufficient impetus for reform without the country's political leadership forging a consensus about the road ahead.

## **Groups most prone to conflict are not the focus of programmatic attention**

Direct work with the most at risk groups, which include urban and rural marginalized youth and unemployed men, is not a principal focus of donor programs probably because the conflict vulnerability lens has not been applied, at least not systematically. Recent research on development programs around the world (Reflecting on Peace Practices, by the Collaborative for Development Action) notes that most programs aimed at stability and peace-building fail to directly incorporate difficult populations like unemployed men and instead focus on "easy to reach" groups that are often not the major source of the problem. . The dangers for developing societies of failing to tackle issues surrounding political and economic marginalization of young people, especially men, are also well documented. While many donor programs, including USAID's, do focus on employment and private sector growth, projected impact for targeted, at-risk groups is generally medium to long-term. More attention should be devoted to addressing the needs of these populations in the nearer-term. In BiH, government officials, CSO representatives, other local actors and the donor community all expressed concern over the poor economic conditions fueling discontent with free-market democracy but infrequently singled out economically vulnerable young men as a category requiring special attention because of their capacity to engage in violence. Unscrupulous political or religious leaders could be tempted to try to mobilize this force or violence could break out spontaneously. The object could be governing institutions but in a society with deep cleavages the chances are high that violence could easily follow ethnic patterns with minority groups in a given locality most at risk.

The Assessment Team would also observe that existing programs that do attempt to facilitate dialogue across the ethnic and religious divide tend to involve those citizens who are already most inclined to participate and this does not usually yield a high percentage of young men. If one accepts the position that an improving economic situation is a necessary but not sufficient condition to radically reduce the chances of armed conflict, there may be a compelling reason for external donors, local CSOs and the BiH government (at the various levels) to develop a tailored strategy to reach out to groups such as marginalized young men to bring them into ongoing or possible new efforts to promote dialogue and reconciliation.

## **Civil society's modest capacity to address conflict issues on a regional and national basis**

With donor support, a relatively small number of CSOs at the national and local levels have designed and implemented programs intended to address various dimensions of the conflict prevention and mitigation issue in BiH. Despite the financial and political backing from the donor community, these groups continue to grapple with a host of challenges that impair their effectiveness and impact. Some of these challenges are common to CSOs generally (e.g. weak management, strategic planning and fundraising), while others speak to the complicated and less than stable political environment that characterizes Bosnia-Herzegovina. First and foremost, groups which seek to force the various ethnic communities to face up to what they did (or tacitly endorsed) during the war years are often viewed as anti-patriotic and/or Western-funded troublemakers intent on stirring up the past for their own parochial reasons. And actually, they do not have an especially prominent public presence. The citizenry is not much aware of the work of these and other CSOs, partly as a result of the sector's uneven coverage in the press.

Those organizations that have undertaken programs aimed at promoting dialogue and reconciliation can be justifiably proud of their work. However, many were also quick to concede that they lack some of the advanced training and expertise needed to upgrade the quality of these programs. That may be one reason why many of these groups tend to adopt a more indirect approach, for example, bringing people together to talk about community development as a way to overcome mistrust and bridge part of the gap, and steering away from the underlying anger and pain related to the war and its aftermath.

Round about methods for getting people to interact have their place but it is incumbent on at least some groups to bring people together to hear the competing narratives as a first step in a long process of truth telling and reconciliation. Such gatherings can be emotionally charged and fraught with confrontations, requiring enormous skill in the hands of conveners and facilitators. It may, for instance, require the assistance of social workers or other trained mental health professionals. It also may be desirable to work with ethnic groups separately before bringing them together so that they can come to terms with their own experiences before sharing them with the “others.” Importantly, even where there is constructive dialogue at the local level, there must be mechanisms that help aggregate impact at the national level or that simultaneously allows for a parallel national process complete with credible political and religious leaders committed to building a new Bosnia-Herzegovina.

## **Growing intra-ethnic political competition**

Increasing political competition within the three ethnic communities holds out the possibility of breaking the stranglehold of nationalist parties on the citizenry. The process has progressed the farthest in the RS, where the SDS’ long-lasting grip on power has been challenged by moderate insurgents at the municipal level. Although popularity of the more moderate forces (SNSD in the RS) remains low and their positions are not particularly palatable to large swaths of the body politic, they seem to be gaining a foothold and could increase their own potential if they can govern effectively.

In contemporary BiH, expert sources informed the Assessment Team that while approximately 30% of the voting population cast their ballots for the nationalists and 20% for the moderate parties, there still remain about 50% of eligible voters that did not participate at all because neither option seemed particularly attractive. The sources claimed that most of these abstainers come from the ranks of young people, which indicates an urgent need to engage young people in the political process. This also means the country is being held “hostage” to often-time virulent nationalist parties that command the support of a decided minority of the voting age population.

Young people are not necessarily apathetic. Knowledgeable students of voting behavior in BiH told the Assessment Team that a substantial portion of young people who eschewed voting were making a considered decision out of contempt for politics as usual and the failure of the parties to field credible candidates that speak to the frustrations and aspirations of the younger generation. We were struck by how many well-informed political observers expressed the view that conditions were ripe for the emergence of a capable political figure to mobilize the electorate around a forward-looking, progressive policy agenda and that reflexive support for nationalist parties would wane if citizens were given a compelling alternative.

The electoral success of a number of politically moderate mayoral candidates in formerly nationalist strongholds in the RS is an encouraging development and lends credence to the notion that people will change allegiances under the right conditions. Significantly, in one of those cities, Trebinje, the victory of the SNSD was secured in coalition with an overtly liberal citizens organization called the Movement for Trebinje. The head of the group was preparing to enter the government in a key advisory role.

The election of moderate challengers in a number of smaller municipalities attests to the reform impulse not being centered solely in the main cities. However, it remains the case that nationally, moderate political parties (which are still ethnically-based) receive much more electoral support in the larger cities than do their harder-line nationalist counterparts. The rural urban divide is by no means unique to BiH, where city dwellers tend to have higher rates of education and favor reform-oriented policies compared with citizens in rural areas.

## Changing political calculations in Belgrade and Zagreb

The growing reluctance of the political establishments in Croatia and Serbia to become entangled in BiH affairs to the detriment of their own European integrationist aspirations is a very positive development. As discussed at length in other parts of this report, BiH Serbs and Croats will continue to look toward Belgrade and Zagreb but are gradually realizing that their future increasingly will be determined by decisions and developments in Sarajevo (and in Brussels). The Assessment Team would predict a weakening of ties between these ethnic communities and their patron states. In the case of the RS, this prospective gradual shift in focus would also have the added benefit of reducing the possible incendiary impact of movement toward an independent Kosovo.

## VII. PROGRAM MAPPING

Another element of the conflict assessment framework is an analysis of a Mission's existing program from the standpoint of reducing the risk of large-scale violence. How conflict sensitive is the array of interventions carried out by the Mission? The impact of these programs can be direct or indirect, deliberate or inadvertent, substantial or non-consequential. At a minimum, the interventions should do no harm and USAID decision makers should be aware of trade-offs or possible spillover effects across assistance areas. In a conflict-prone or politically fragile environment the cost of failing to consider foreseeable adverse consequences of a given course of action can be huge.

The Assessment Team examined USAID/Bosnia-Herzegovina's programs and overall strategy to determine whether they ameliorate, exacerbate or have little impact on the potentially dangerous constellation of conditions and cleavages identified in the course of its work. We did not see ourselves as having a mandate to recommend an overhaul of the Mission's present strategy and programs. Nor, we concluded, is one warranted.

Overall, the Team found that while a number of different programs contribute --to varying degrees-- to conflict prevention and mitigation, there is more that could be done to enhance the impact of ongoing efforts. Interventions in the areas of democratic governance, minority returns and economic revitalization either addressed some of the root causes of violent conflict or strengthened the capacity of society to deal with conditions that could give rise to violence. In addition to presenting some ideas to boost the conflict-prevention potential of existing programs through minor recalibration, the Assessment Team also thinks that modest additional programming is needed and that present and prospective programs should be integrated into a coherent strategic initiative in order to maximize impact.

The Team did not identify any ongoing programs that appeared to increase the prospects for violent conflict. To be sure, democratization can itself be destabilizing, but BiH is well along in the transition and there is little evidence to suggest that deepening the process would increase the likelihood of political violence.

Two other points are worth mentioning. First, even the comparatively generous level of assistance provided by USAID and other USG agencies does not ensure impact regardless how well designed and implemented aid programs might be or the degree of harmony between programs and overall policy. The challenges facing Bosnia-Herzegovina are formidable and the U.S. is but one actor. The actions of other donors, neighboring countries, and most importantly, the people of BiH matter much more.

The second point is a familiar methodological one about attribution. It is extremely difficult to document program impact. Nor was the Assessment Team charged with carrying out a program evaluation. Rather, we sought to identify conditions and divisions that could give rise to violent conflict and then look at the Mission's portfolio to see whether it addressed these potential conflict-drivers. Only in an impressionistic fashion was the Team able to draw some conclusions about the effectiveness of programs that directly or indirectly engage conflict-relevant issues.

## Democracy Building

Established democratic societies have a range of institutional mechanisms, procedures and processes that promote stability and avoid broad-based political violence. These capacities in turn, reflect the tendency of democratic political systems to do a much better job than their authoritarian counterparts to nurture values of tolerance, pluralism, and compromise that mitigate inevitable tensions and contestation for influence and political power.

The capacity of well-functioning democratic systems to reduce the likelihood of conflict is implicitly recognized by USAID/BiH. In seeking to improve democratic governance, encourage more representative and responsive political parties, bolster civil society to advocate for democratic reforms, and strengthen independent media, the Mission has in place the core of an effective effort to dampen conditions that have given rise to violent conflict. That these institutions and processes are relatively weak correspondingly reduces the ability of the BiH state and civil society to tackle and/or fend off the constellation of forces that drive violent conflict. There is a window of opportunity to help transform politics and institutions to advance conflict prevention goals through modest changes in the content of technical assistance, training and other programs to focus explicitly on truth, restorative justice and reconciliation.

Democracy is no panacea for conflict mitigation. Under certain conditions the introduction of democracy can be highly destabilizing, particularly in the short-run, as new political arrangements may threaten historically dominant elites and empower formerly marginalized groups. However, in Bosnia-Herzegovina, accelerating and consolidating democratic reform is more likely to advance than retard the stability and conflict prevention. However, the governing political establishment has been remarkably adroit in defending its long-standing privileged position and can be expected to resist far-reaching reforms. Here again, the heavy presence of the international community constitutes a strong deterrent to those who would contemplate violence to advance political ends.

As discussed below and elaborated in the recommendations section, many DG programs could be adjusted slightly to contribute more directly to conflict prevention and mitigation.

## Rule of Law

Mission efforts to help erect a more professional, responsive and capable justice sector contribute to conflict mitigation since a well functioning judiciary is a prerequisite for establishing the rule of law, which in turn is essential for peace and stability. Some activities could be more closely linked to addressing inter-ethnic tensions, especially at the local level.

Two programs with notable potential to engage conflict issues at the local level are the Administrative Law and Procedural Systems (ALPS) and the ABA/CEELI rule of law programs. Both relate to everyday challenges faced by citizens. For example, there is a need to work with local legal institutions –courts, police etc.—to foster a welcoming environment for ethnic minorities so as to encourage them to use the legal system to remedy grievances. Are there ways that administrative law reform could profitably deal with issues of inter-ethnic discord? The judiciary could also be more proactive in disseminating information about truth and acknowledgement of past war-related crimes that would elevate their credibility in the eyes of aggrieved citizens. The Judicial Sector Development Program could help BiH citizens tackle the politicized court system by addressing in a more visible way inter-ethnic, and intra-ethnic divides that lead many to doubt the fairness of the judicial system.

USAID implementers played an important role in the passage of the Law on Mediation. The project should now consider how to encourage use of available mechanisms and assist CSOs to provide such services, possibly for a fee, in complementing the formal judicial system. Some of the cleavages that beset BiH may be more amenable to mediation and dispute resolution, particularly at the local level.

## Civil Society

Despite the modest influence of CSOs in shaping public policy, the major program to bolster the capacity of civil society has met with some success. Groups involved in different aspects of conflict prevention work, mostly on truth telling, have received support but are waging a difficult struggle for broader acceptance and impact. Helping them to enhance their organizational capacity while also supporting coalition work would be a welcome focus from the standpoint of addressing conflict issues. One encouraging episode brought to the attention of the Assessment Team was the Civil Society Development Program’s work to de-politicize the primary school system in Tuzla Canton. It’s an example of an activity that could be replicated in other municipalities.

Since the DemNet Program closed in August 2004, the Mission should think about how its follow-on effort could focus more consciously on conflict prevention and how to utilize the various networks and venues that are usually a part of such programs for inter-ethnic dialogue. *Nova Praksa* grants clearly address some conflict drivers head-on through collaboration on concrete issues, a practical, results-oriented strategy that is sometimes missing from work in this sphere.

Another potentially valuable and well-timed program for addressing conflict concerns is the Policy Analysis and Dialogue Organizations Program, which supports such capable groups as the Prism Center for Applied Social Research and Center for Economic Research – Sarajevo. As elaborated in the recommendations section, the Assessment Team believes strongly that issues surrounding the causes, consequences and potential for conflict must serve as the basis for a national-level dialogue about the past and the way forward. These organizations can help facilitate that process and serve as idea entrepreneurs. The Team also learned of at least three new think tank oriented initiatives planned to commence in early 2005 that could be enlisted to bring to bear public policy analysis and outreach capabilities on problems related to ethnic and religious divisions and conflict vulnerability.

A glaring gap in conflict prevention/mitigation is the lack of an effective network (formal or informal) of organizations working on various dimensions of this issue. Support for strengthening existing CSOs, links and helping to forge new ones would contribute substantially to more effective advocacy.

Trade union members could be activated through the ACILS labor program to build awareness of shared concerns and policy issues across ethnic and entity lines. Trade unions can be a civil society resource and not just an often-disappointing object of efforts to build popular support for economic reforms.

Some of the other implementers carrying out programs geared to strengthen the CSO sector should be part of a discussion about the potential for violent conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina and asked to generate ideas about how their efforts might be harnessed to contribute to reducing the risks. There must be some recognition that groups active on conflict issues may have a more difficult time becoming sustainable due to the controversial nature of their work in a deeply divided society.

## Independent Media

Bosnia-Herzegovina shows how media in the hands of a demagogic leaders can abet the onset of horrific violence. Despite impressive strides in recent years, such as the expansion of some responsible independent newspapers to nationwide circulation, the level of media professionalism leaves considerable room for improvement. Many publications continue to perpetuate stereotypes and fuel ethnic tensions. BiH has the requisite indigenous human resources to help address these shortcomings. USAID-supported work on the legal, regulatory and policy environment for a free and vibrant press ought to continue especially assisting the Press Council to monitor and counteract deliberate untruths intended to exacerbate division. Progress on this front will also help to reduce self-censorship, a serious and widespread problem that disproportionately affects those journalists with a strong desire to tackle controversial issues, including ones dealing with inter-ethnic relations and potential for conflict. Self-censorship would not be an issue if journalists who do raise controversial questions were not harassed and threatened.

Getting the media more engaged on conflict issues should be approached from the demand and supply sides simultaneously. On the latter, the Support to Independent Media Project could incorporate topics having to do with the possibility of violent conflict into various programs. The series of radio dramas addressing tensions among young people living in an environment of different nationalities and ethnicities underway at eFM Student radio is an excellent example. The Center for Investigative Journalism project could focus on conflict issues in its programs for local journalists. Themes of truth, justice and reconciliation could be weaved into training programs geared to increase the level of professionalism in the journalism community while also ensuring that groups of participants are ethnically diverse. Cross-entity networks should be encouraged, as might the use of trainers from third countries that are/have been similarly afflicted with ethnic and religious schisms.

On the demand side, training programs for CSO staff on how to work with the media to increase coverage of conflict related issues would be most welcome. In some cases, CSOs are already trying to inform and cultivate journalists such that their organizations become sources of reliable information and expert commentary for print and broadcast media. Few of these groups have a concerted media strategy.

## Political Pluralism and Elections

USAID/BiH political party building support plausibly contributed to and can capitalize on increased competition within the nationalist party organizations that in turn aid the cause of conflict prevention and mitigation. The victory of moderate parties underscores this accelerating political competition and the corresponding opportunity to expand organizational strengthening at the national, entity and local levels. With the next set of national elections not scheduled until 2006, there is not much time to make an immediate difference. However, by focusing on the subsequent elections in 2010, there is an opportunity to take a medium-term view employing both bottom up and top down approaches. To this end, the Mission should consider bolstering emerging networks of progressive politicians drawing mostly from the more moderate ethnic based parties (e.g. SNSD etc.) while also reaching out to receptive elements within the main nationalist parties – all with the goal of reducing ethnicity as the central organizing principle of political life in contemporary BiH.

While many programs in BiH have focused on moderate political networks, the Assessment Team saw some new opportunities that came directly from the politicians and from recent municipal electoral successes. For example, in Trebinje the mayor talked about building an exchange and coalition of newly elected mayors in the RS in order to be sure they pool resources and forces. He also talked about a political coalition with mayors throughout Herzegovina, since that is the economic area that Trebinje belongs to – he values this over solidarity with colleagues in Banja Luka. In addition, the successes of the political coalition formed in Trebinje that drew youth out in large enough numbers to change the political landscape can serve as an inspiration for new ideas about building political options.

The Political Party and Parliamentary Development Program could be more forward looking in pushing inter-ethnic cooperation via promotion of issue-based politics in selected municipalities, the development of local policy analysis organizations, and in its assistance to select government ministries in developing communication strategies. Work in the parliament that helped link CSOs and select committees have borne fruit and might be adjusted modestly to take on harder issues related to overcoming the legacy of conflict more directly.

Low voter registration and turnout continue to reduce the potential for political change and may suggest a level of indifference and/or alienation that could be converted into political violence. The Mission should maintain a focus on combating voter apathy but focus most of its programmatic attention on young people who appear to make up by the far the largest group of abstainers (according to experts interviewed for this assessment). Indeed, the recent political success of the moderates in the town of Trebinje indicates that engagement of youth in political processes can tip the balance. Groups such as the Alumni Association of the Center for Interdisciplinary Postgraduate Studies of the University of Sarajevo (ACIPS) have already formulated plans for reaching out to youth. And the Assessment Team detected some interesting ideas percolating among the youth intelligentsia about political reform and prospects for a broad-based movement that engages the hopes and aspirations of young citizens.

Get out the vote and voter education are geared to the election cycle and thus are less relevant over the next few years. But a helpful complement to political party building may be school-based civic education programs that would explain why political parties and other institutions are essential to a vibrant democracy and seek to nurture a more participatory political culture.

## Democratic Local Governance

USAID-funded programs to strengthen local governance have had an impact. More citizens are living in municipalities with better functioning administration and a higher degree of transparency and accountability. Ideas such as one-stop local service centers in the main municipal building have been especially popular. In launching the new GAP program, the Mission is poised to build on previous success as it begins identifying 40 municipalities in which to work. With particular attention to those jurisdictions with mayors and councils committed to repairing persisting ethnic and other rifts, the program could be a valuable part of a broader conflict prevention strategy.

In the wake of several oft-cited local level electoral victories for politically moderate candidates/parties, the timing of GAP is auspicious. Yet program architects and implementers appear to have given little if any thought to how this governance initiative could contribute to weakening conflict drivers or boosting conflict prevention capacities of individuals, groups and institutions at the local level.

Local administrations' outreach to minority groups and to CSOs and citizens groups active on key aspects of the truth, justice and reconciliation equation, can make a big difference both in terms of conferring legitimacy and increasing potential impact. Trying to bring in progressive elements of the business

community is another challenge, made all the more compelling because of the need to engage economically marginalized groups such as unemployed young men.

The power of convocation gives local governments the ability to bring together different elements of the community, including the various ethnic groups, with the stated purpose of improving residents' lives but with the implicit goal of fostering cross-ethnic communication and cooperation. Advisory councils on local economic development could be one such mechanism but it's easy to envision other activities that have the twin virtues of addressing concrete problems and lessening social tensions. A number of local officials stated forthrightly to the Assessment Team that they would be interested in exercising more proactive leadership on inter-ethnic dialogue and collaboration if they had the requisite skills and tools. This is an opening for USAID or another donor to meet what could be growing demand.

## Economic Development

Integrating conflict prevention into economic programming is more challenging.

This does not mean that the array of programs that are typically carried out under the banner of economic reform cannot contribute to conflict prevention and abatement. Whether fortifying a well functioning legal and regulatory environment, alleviating material hardship of groups especially prone to political violence, or using projects to encourage cooperation across a political, religious or ethnic divide, economic programming can be part of the solution to problems that drive conflict, particularly when this goal is deliberately integrated into Mission activities.

Because poverty and inequality are rarely sufficient conditions to ignite violence, programs to lessen them are not adequate to prevent armed conflict. Simply addressing material deprivation will not render a country impervious to political violence. At the same time, socio-economic conditions/grievances are frequently an important contributing factor to conflict. Thus poverty and inequality and the range of closely related issues (e.g. equal access to justice, security, education and other public goods) ought not be ignored by governing elites and the international community, especially in countries that have experienced conflict or have serious social divisions. Both of those risk factors apply to BiH. Decision makers should think through the anticipated consequences of economic policies and interventions for possible adverse impact on those groups thought susceptible to recruitment for conflict.

## Fiscal Reform

USAID's work to increase government efficiency and accountability and to improve citizen services through the creation of transparent budgeting and tax systems reduces the potential for ethnic parties to use public resources for divisive ends. The power and authority of the state often makes it the object of contestation among political actors intent on gaining control over resources to benefit a relatively narrow slice of the population. More transparent processes and greater accountability help reduce the incentives for political parties to seize the state to govern in their own self-interest.

The Tax Administration Modernization Project (TAMP) similarly has potential conflict mitigation impacts by reducing corruption on the input side to government. State offices are less a target worth fighting over when officials are not able to provide tax exemptions at their discretion or provide opportunities for tax arbitrage between various jurisdictions.

The Public Sector Accounting Project also reduces the potential to misuse state offices for private, possible conflict-instigating ends. Transparency in government transactions abets greater public awareness and potential scrutiny of spending policies, and enables auditors and others to rigorously assess the costs and benefits of spending decisions, and determine which groups benefit from government



programs or arrears. Evidence that programs privilege some communities while disadvantaging others can promote conflict. While some government transactions may have these characteristics, bringing these tendencies to light and then taking steps to correct the maldistribution of resources can reduce tensions across ethnic and religious boundaries.

## Financial Sector Reform

Tightening banking supervision and supporting deposit insurance agencies helps remove another source of financing for conflict or ways for state authorities to channel private resources to preferred partners.

Creating a secured financing system for movable property contributes national integration since the system covers both the Federation and the RS. Providing an efficient mechanism to recover unpaid loans through seizure and disposition of the property used as security for loans, and to make sure the same property does not secure loans in more than one component of the country stimulates banks to provide loans secured by movable property to businesses and individuals.

Merging the Federation and RS Banking Agencies into one state-level agency promotes a nationwide banking system to facilitate economic transactions between and among entities and cantons. Denser links do not by themselves render conflict impossible but they do create more incentives for the parties to avoid disruptions to mutually beneficial ties. In addition, state-level institutions allow for more checks and balances so that one cannot seek benefit only for one's own group – instead business and transactions require a process of finding a medium that benefits all. Deposit insurance can also contribute by reducing the likelihood of banking crises that can touch off political violence. Care ought to be taken to ensure that the new system equally benefits (or potentially benefits) the country's main social and ethnic groups.

## Private Enterprise Development

In supporting the development of the private sector, programs on expanding access to credit, creating linkages within industries, and helping businesses to become effective lobbying organizations often need to cross entity, cantonal, and ethnic lines to build bridges and transcend divisions. This can be through mechanisms that encourage or require cross-entity participation in training and technical assistance or through more subtle means that build mutually beneficial economic interests that would be costly to break and profitable for people on all sides of the ethnic divide (although all the ethnic groups had these economic links before the war and this still did not prevent war – which only emphasizes the fact that economic programs do not provide the entire solution).

The Cluster Competitiveness Activity (CCA), through work with private companies in the wood products sector, has considerable potential to ensure that development of timber resources is managed soundly for the benefit of the BiH citizenry rather than particular ethnic groups or political interests. The program should be cognizant of the challenging political environment in which private businesses operate and work explicitly to reduce corruption and organized crime in the forest sector. Tourism, especially in Herzegovina, may provide ways to reduce the HDZ role in the region's economy.

The Linking Agricultural Markets and Producers and Processors (LAMP) program that focuses on strengthening producers, processors and wholesale and retail enterprises in agriculture, also could give greater emphasis to working across entity and cantonal lines to promote inter-ethnic ties that are profitable for the private sector. Guided by the principle of “do no harm”, program managers need to monitor that assistance is provided fairly and equitably, rather than benefiting any one group.

## Legal and Regulatory Reform

Private sector accounting might seem unrelated to conflict. Yet to the extent the project is connected with efforts to transfer socially owned enterprises from the state to the private sector, which takes their arrears and operations out of the hands of political leaders that may be tied to ethnic parties, accounting can weaken those groups that benefit from the present situation and that often are hostile to reform.

The Fostering an Investor-Friendly Legal Environment (FILE) activity can build support for national integration and the establishment of a network of self-interested professionals across cantonal, entity, and ethnic lines through work on legal frameworks that support private business. Similarly, a strong coalition for WTO accession can also bring together influential business and other leaders of the various ethnic communities, a cooperative experience that can carry over to other spheres. Training and technical assistance should be provided principally in a multi-ethnic context that can reinforce common interests, including increasing the effectiveness of state structures.

Reducing corruption by strengthening the Supreme Audit Agency can help foster national integration and weaken forces that benefited from the past conflict and the post-war instability for the same reasons as many other activities that promote transparency and constrain exploitation of public resources by entrenched elites. Large strategic and government-owned enterprises, especially power and telecommunications companies, have been used support ethnic political party machines that perpetuate division. Instead, open, transparent accounting and management that prevents the diversion of public funds works to the benefit of the entire citizenry.

## VIII. PROGRAMMATIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Bosnia-Herzegovina remains vulnerable to the outbreak of localized, ethnic violence that carries with it an inherent risk of escalation, and is prone to broader-based conflict over the long run if various permissive conditions are not addressed. The political establishment and perhaps a large majority of the population appear intent on downplaying or ignoring the constellation of factors and conditions that could spawn violent conflict. For its part, USAID/BiH is pursuing an assistance strategy, key components of which address some of these potential conflict drivers. Programs and activities could be modestly altered to give them a more direct and durable impact on reducing the prospects for political violence. The Team is not proposing a major overhaul of the present strategy and does not think it necessary or wise to try to integrate conflict prevention considerations into each and every program. However, **slightly recalibrating specific programs to advance conflict mitigation goals** would benefit BiH, USAID, and the USG. Some ideas were presented in the previous section on mapping the Mission's programs.

**The Assessment Team strongly recommends that USAID/BiH launch a new initiative building on previous and ongoing programs to 1) address persisting social cleavages that threaten stability; 2) target segments of the population most inclined to perpetrate violence; and 3) strengthen the capacity of selected civil society groups and other institutional actors to move the country to confront the past as a means to inter-ethnic reconciliation and cooperation.** Mindful of budgetary constraints, we believe that such an undertaking can be carried out in large part by adjusting and augmenting a select number of ongoing programs. Incorporating them into a single initiative should provide greater overall strategic coherence and enhance cross-program synergies. Doing so would also give greater clarity to a two-fold strategy of weakening nationalist and other forces intent on maintaining or exacerbating ethnic-based divisions and strengthening governmental and non-governmental institutions and actors that address conditions that could give rise to violent conflict.

## Initiative on Facing the Past and Building a Better Future

Starting from the premise that the failure to deal with the causes and consequences of civil strife which decimated the country a decade ago runs the risk of future political violence, we recommend that the Mission design an initiative that will help BiH society to face the past psychologically and politically and then begin the arduous task of reconciliation. This would complement OHR's USG-supported effort to bring to justice those guilty of atrocities below the threshold of the Hague Tribunal, linking it to a larger, more integrated, multi-pronged approach to address some fundamental causes of conflict. There will be no reliable peace in Bosnia-Herzegovina without a concerted, sustained effort to reach a common account of what happened in the war for national supremacy and forge a consensus about how to move the country forward. And to the extent that poverty and unemployment increase the chances of conflict, the country's failure to confront the past vis-à-vis arresting war criminals, could prevent BiH's integration into European structures and institutions -- without which the prospects for economic prosperity are decidedly diminished. For its part, the international community faces the perpetual deployment of peacekeeping forces in BiH if the society does not move to deal with the legacies of the conflict, most significantly deep divisions within the body politic.

While any initiative to confront the past and to discuss in concrete terms possible constitutional (i.e. Dayton Agreement) and administrative/institutional changes must find local ownership, USAID in concert with OHR and with other donors can and should play a catalytic role in that process. The IC is out in front of most BiH citizens, but there are courageous men and women who are capable of helping to lead the way, perhaps starting at the grassroots level, with the support of their international allies. The Assessment Team is aware that previous attempts by the IC to jumpstart a national process of dialogue and reconciliation have not been fruitful and concur with the resulting lesson that only a homegrown effort has any chance of success. This does not, however, consign the donor community to a passive role. In addition, we would contend that some relevant conditions are changing for the better and that BiH cannot afford to allow other deleterious factors to weaken the existing modestly stable platform from which to launch another attempt. It must be carefully crafted to avoid past mistakes and should put local ownership at the center. Among its specific components and guiding principles are the following:

### Convene a small group of influential actors

As a first step, preferably in conjunction with other donors, we would suggest USAID take the lead in convening a relatively small group of respected political figures, heads of prominent CSOs involved in some aspect of truth, justice and reconciliation work, and other insightful observers of BiH politics and society to discuss issues of conflict vulnerability and prevention/mitigation. This would be an excellent step toward supporting broader social dialogue on the sensitive topic of conflict and ongoing tensions. The Mission could use the findings and recommendations of this assessment as the starting point for these discussions and hopefully become part of a broader effort to develop an appropriately tailored, multi-pronged, medium- to long-term strategy to combat prospective violent conflict.

An effort like this should not become bogged down in parochial disputes about representation, but focus on convening actors engaged in cross-ethnic activities (such as CSOs or mayors that have demonstrated a willingness to speak frankly and work together). Most social, economic and political actors in BiH have some baggage or affiliation – this is a downfall of working at this level – that will require an open and creative approach to bridge. If an initial small, focused dialogue is successful, it may be repeated with an expanded or different set of characters, using previous participants as facilitators.

## Support a process of national dialogue

Convening a small number of influential actors to discuss issues revolving around violent conflict would help encourage a broader national dialogue, the necessary core of any initiative on confronting the past and imagining the future. *By its nature, dialogue is a process not a discrete event.* It could commence with high profile conferences in the capital or grassroots gatherings in the provinces, or proceed on both trajectories simultaneously. The content should involve some combination of looking back and looking ahead, using the upcoming ten-year anniversary of the cessation of fighting as the rationale for pausing as a country to take stock of how BiH has evolved since the war and the legacies with which the country must still contend. It would look both at the truths of the war for all sides and the future potential for a country with layers of administrative structures that it cannot afford.

The Assessment Team can see benefits as well as possible drawbacks of this process but on balance thinks the risk of politicization for partisan advantage and the pain accompanying an examination of the past will be outweighed by an honest discussion of conflict-related issues that continue to hinder development and the possibility of committed people from political, religious, business and non-governmental communities coming together to devise common solutions. Alarmist perspectives are sure to be counter-productive and lacking in credibility. The dominant tone should be one that accurately portrays BiH as continuing to exhibit a bevy of risk factors for conflict, even while positive change and momentum exists. This does not mean the focus should turn negative or backward looking – simply that the continued challenges need to be openly acknowledged and that past abuses or atrocities clearly mentioned (not swept under the rug for the sake of an “upbeat” event). USAID would not have to be the leader of this effort but should certainly be using its own funding and program frameworks to support activities or forums that allow this dialogue.

As part of the national dialogue, independent think tanks and other policy-related institutions, particularly those that receive USAID funding through the Urban Institute’s policy analysis and research support program, should be encouraged to play a leading role in the process. One idea is for them to analyze different approaches (e.g. truth commissions, national war crimes tribunals etc.) taken by other countries in the aftermath of internecine violence on a large scale or other major upheaval that overturned the old political order. These idea shops could also formulate and promote policy innovations that directly address conditions deemed closely linked to the possible onset of violence. But we should be clear that our desire for now is dialogue – we do not expect the think tanks to come up with all the solutions, but rather to facilitate and create forums that allow the necessary dialogue to acknowledge the pros and cons of the many existing ideas and solutions. Although think tanks are still weak in BiH, this type of discussion facilitation – well implemented -- could help raise their credibility as institutions that help translate policy and ideas to the public with an independent approach and in a neutral way.

A core group of CSOs also could also be mobilized for a more robust public outreach effort. Many of these groups already receive funding from USAID or other donors and would be eager to participate in an outreach strategy as part of the larger national dialogue process. They may want to consider forming a temporary coalition with a major group serving as a secretariat.

The media is pivotal in any successful outreach. Not only would CSOs benefit from additional training on how to work effectively with broadcast and print media but journalists would also be profit from workshops on how to cover issues of conflict management and prevention. The Support to the Independent Media (SIM) program could incorporate that theme more systematically into its professional training and development activities. Radio dramas on eFM Student Radio that dealt with ethnic tensions among young people are an example of harnessing the media to help disseminate and educate.

Alerting journalists to some of the enlightened voices speaking out on issues of ethnic tensions and even more importantly to the actions of ordinary citizens involved in successful, practical efforts to transcend

the ethnic divide might generate more attention to these issues and give readers and viewers hope that collective action can make a difference. This is an important aspect of assistance to the media. Although the media played a generally well-documented negative (often fomenting) role leading up to and throughout the conflicts in the Balkans, journalists with whom we met did not really appear inclined to acknowledge this fact. It is necessary to be sure that Bosnians talk about collective responsibility and do not bury their heads in the sand. The media needs to clearly understand the ways in which reporting interacts with and affects conflict and civil society needs to be able to access the media for dialogue on these difficult issues. Whether future assistance takes the form of training or exchanges or special issues is a topic for discussion – but the fact is that journalism and conflict sensitivity needs more attention in BiH. This should not be understood as a PR effort, but rather a skills building and communication strategy for more effectively playing a positive role vis-à-vis conflict vulnerability and the public at large.

While the immediate impetus (and a fair portion of the necessary resources) for this initiative would come from the donor community, its content and implementation would be largely in the hands of BiH actors. Local ownership is always important but never more so than in circumstances such as in BiH where large segments of the population are not dealing with issues related to conflict -- and where the presence of the international community has obviated the need for the country's citizens to take responsibility for their own fate. Those courageous men and women who understand that BiH society must grapple with the legacy of the war in order to move forward as a "normal country" can take a leadership role in this process with the support of the U.S. and the international community.

## Expand programming at the local level

National dialogue does not just mean elite-level discussions confined to Sarajevo, although that is vitally important for raising the profile of issues related to confronting the past. Where there are local officials and community organizations prepared to engage in such efforts, they should be strongly encouraged and supported, including financially in the case of grassroots groups, even if limited to intra-ethnic discussions. Reconciliation and eventual cooperation across ethnic lines remains the main goal but breaking the monopoly of nationalist political parties and encouraging more debate within the Bosniak, Croat and Serb communities about the war and its impact on present-day life is an essential step. Where cross-ethnic dialogue is possible, perhaps in cities such as Mostar, every effort should be made to support it, building on multi-ethnic citizen associations where they exist. In all instances, support might include technical assistance and training, which is generally available locally (e.g. Nansen Dialogue Centers). Innovative programs that bring together members of different ethnic groups to work on practical local problems should be complemented by more direct discussions about the state of inter-communal relations and the genesis of tensions.

Throughout this report, we have called attention to promising political developments at the local level, citing the election of more moderate mayoral candidates in several municipalities, including in the RS, as well as promising programs by citizens groups and CSOs. We would encourage USAID to be even more aggressive in using existing assistance mechanisms to support progressive local leaders –government officials, religious figures, CSO activists-- that are demonstrably committed to cross-ethnic cooperation and who recognize the need for the country to heal its deep social divisions if it is to become a prosperous democratic society firmly anchored in the West.

The Mission is continuing to fund local government programs and has in the past rightly made progress on minority returns a prerequisite for assistance to those administrations. A logical next step is to provide additional assistance to those local authorities willing to become stronger advocates for addressing ethnic-based divisions within their cities and towns and who work to foster inter-communal dialogue and cooperation. Implementers should look for opportunities to transfer practical knowledge in this area, relying principally on BiH organizations with the requisite expertise. Sometimes, the

intervention can be as simple as sensitizing local officials about the need to create a more welcoming environment for members of minority communities that seek to access government services. Politically offensive symbols such as nationalist flags displayed prominently outside town halls or plaques commemorating the sacrifices of nationalists who likely committed unconscionable acts against minority populations (both instances of poor judgment were observed by the Team) have no place in a new BiH.

The larger point is that a new generation of local political leaders is beginning to come to office, presenting an opportunity for USAID and other donors to collaborate with them to break the stranglehold of nationalist political parties and build more tolerant, multi-ethnic communities. Replicating progress in individual municipalities to achieve nation-wide impact is a formidable challenge but it does not in any way minimize the importance of supporting enlightened office holders and policies at the local level.

## **Galvanize civil society at local and national levels**

Strong support for progressive local officials ought not come at the expense of continued assistance to grassroots CSOs and community groups that are engaged in various efforts that contribute to the larger goal of a more self-reflective body politic willing and able to address conditions that can give rise to deadly conflict. In some cases, these organizations have begun to work in tandem with local governments or at least have achieved some measure of influence on how these administrations go about their work. These groups also might be eligible for local government funding to carry out activities (e.g. working with at-risk youth; leading workshops on inter-communal dialogue). If USAID can help foster links between local government and civil society in the area of conflict prevention it will have accomplished a great deal. Were these links to extend to the small business community in an attempt to secure its support for inclusive, cross-ethnic local development plans, so much the better. All of this would require USAID/BiH to intensify its efforts to identify groups that are doing work to expose and heal ethnic-based fissures in secondary cities and towns across the country.

Work at the local level complement efforts to engage national level organizations and influential individuals already carrying out or willing to become involved in activities to reduce the prospects for violent conflict. Continued funding for the more visible, national CSOs whose work is immensely positive but can be controversial or disquieting to members of society who do not want to reflect on the past (such as some human rights and peace building organizations) is essential. More attention should be devoted to enhancing the outreach and strategic communications capacity of key groups, to encouraging more effective advocacy on behalf of issues of common interest and concern, and strengthening links between national and grassroots groups in a multi-pronged bottom-up and top down strategy. Even Sarajevo-based groups, despite support from USAID and other donors, can be fairly isolated due in part to BiH government policies that have impeded regional political integration. These organizations could benefit from closer ties to counterparts in the Balkans, Western Europe and U.S..

## **Support political party renovation**

Political parties must become an engine of reform and opponents of sectarianism if Bosnia-Herzegovina is to consolidate its transition toward democracy and reduce the risk of renewed violent conflict. As discussed elsewhere in this report, political parties suffer from a multitude of weaknesses but from the standpoint of conflict mitigation and prevention the highest priority is to try to end the chokehold of the nationalist parties in all three ethnic communities. The country will not have normal politics and will keep sowing the seeds of division and conflict if these parties continue to command widespread support among their constituents. What can USAID and the donor community do to help lessen the appeal of purveyors of ethnic-based fear and to assist moderates in the party system (as well as the religious community) to gain a foothold and articulate a more hopeful message of tolerance and co-existence?

For one, USAID-supported political party support programs should attempt to link reform minded party officials and office holders in a network both within and across the entities. For example, if they are amenable, USAID could respond to an idea the Assessment Team heard from the new mayor of Trebinje, namely reaching out to the newly elected mayors in the RS that defeated SDS incumbents and provide networking opportunities and help facilitate an ongoing exchange of ideas among them and if palatable, with reform-minded counterparts in majority Bosniak and Croat portions of the Federation. The Mission should also try to respond favorably to overtures from these more moderate elected officials about making their localities more hospitable environments for minority groups. A number of new mayors struck the team as willing to be proactive in reaching out to often marginalized and beleaguered minorities and to help promote inter-ethnic dialogue if they had the requisite tools. As mentioned under a separate recommendation, the Assessment Team sees USAID local governance programs as either providing training or linking these municipalities with relevant CSOs that do.

Political party programming should also focus more on youth. Steadily declining voter turnout as well as and survey data convey young people's cynicism and disdain for politics. They tend to view their political leaders as inept and corrupt and as having little regard for ordinary citizens. Whether the younger generation holds more tolerant attitudes is not clear but the combination of alienation and dismal economic prospects on top of sufferings inflicted by the war could make for a combustible mixture in the hands of unscrupulous political or religious leaders.

A more hopeful interpretation of the situation suggests that alienated citizens, young and old, would be prepared to support a new breed of political leader who spoke convincingly about the need to improve people's lives and focused on performance rather than self-serving rhetoric about the threats posed by one ethnic group to another. In this view, low voter turnout is an informed decision on by the electorate.

The donor community must not try to anoint particular individuals but it can help nurture the next generation of leaders who can capture the imagination of the large swath of the body politic that has all but retreated from the public sphere. USAID has extensive experience with programs that identify promising young political leaders around the world. In BiH, recipients of such training in addition to having a reformist perspective should also demonstrate a commitment to an inclusive vision of a unified country. Program that take this into account would not necessarily focus on youth in existing parties or on new youth parties. Rather, these programs would look at examples like the Trebinje success at mobilizing youth and would figure out what engages them in the political process in general. In Sarajevo, some post-graduate student groups discussed a desire to work on get out the vote activities for youth. Eventually, these groups would be interested in being more active in nurturing political alternatives, whether these alternatives would be parties or something more along the lines of youth coalition partners is an open question. At the end of the day, youth has the potential to act as a swing group in BiH politics.

For reasons elaborated in another section, political party work should also help women to find their voice as a moderating influence in BiH politics. One small way to contribute to that goal is to ensure that any young leaders singled out for additional training include a proportionate share of women. Programs that encourage women in leadership positions in civil society and the business community to consider seeking election at various levels of government would increase the number and role of women in public life.

## Engage spoilers

Effective efforts to address the drivers of violent conflict need to enlist the active support of peace builders while reaching out to actors who may see it in their interest to foment violence. Donors will need to overcome their understandable proclivity to focus their efforts on those social actors that share a commitment to conflict prevention and mitigation rather than the often unsavory and anti-reformist forces that have the incentive and capability to unleash violence. In some cases, USG officials and assistance

programs can engage would-be spoilers directly. This is not possible with the SDS as the USG is not prepared to alter its policy of not dealing with the party. There may be creative ways to engage them indirectly, for example, making sure they understand U.S. aims and programs. Publicizing new U.S. assistance programs operating in cities that have turned out SDS mayors may help bring popular pressure to bear on sitting SDS officials. In some places, SDS leaders who spread falsehoods about U.S. goals and objectives in the country were unaware that USAID had implemented programs in their towns.

Spoilers can be neutralized, defeated, or co-opted. The most efficacious strategy will be context dependent but if the goal is to prevent violence, attempts should be made to engage influential individuals and organizations who flirt with violence to persuade them to adopt peaceful means for resolving disputes, addressing grievances and achieving political goals. In BiH that means working with the unreconstructed nationalist political and religious leaders and parties that other programs marginalize.

## Engage young people

As discussed throughout this report, young people, particularly young men, who are economically marginalized and generally disconnected from public life, constitute a potential reservoir of recruits for elites intent on fomenting political violence. Young people in urban and semi-urban areas may be particularly at risk because they are usually less firmly socially anchored than in rural areas and because of the proximity of different ethnic groups. Bosnia-Herzegovina does not have a “youth bulge” but does exhibit a number of other conditions such as high unemployment, war-spawned grievances, provocatively nationalist political parties and easy availability of weapons that together render young people more vulnerable to recruitment to violence.

Program ideas span the entire portfolio and would include generating economic opportunities through skills development and job training (tied to the prospect of actual employment possibilities), micro-credit, SME expansion etc; youth organizations, especially ones that emphasize civic action and create bonds with the larger community; and new or revamped political parties responsive to the needs and aspirations of young people and that seek to mobilize young people around a reform agenda. All of these programs expand opportunities for young people and anchor them more securely in community institutions. Psycho-social support remains a potentially valuable intervention in many instances. (See the “Youth and Conflict Tool Kit” from the Office of Conflict Management and Mitigation).

## Amplify women’s voices in the country’s political life

Women may be marginalized in terms of the formal political structure, including parties, but their prominence in civil society provides a platform for giving women a voice in the conduct of public affairs and is an incubator for future leaders. It is no coincidence that in BiH as in many other Balkan countries, women head organizations that are involved in various aspects of truth, transitional justice and reconciliation work. There is anecdotal evidence that the country’s women are more prepared than their male counterparts to confront the past and build a genuinely multi-ethnic future.

In many respects women suffered disproportionately during the war (comparatively high rates of domestic violence may also have their roots in the conflict). A shared sense of loss has helped transform them into a peace resource – a large segment of the population that disdains the divisive fear mongering that is the staple of many political leaders. Expanding and harnessing this resource should be part of a more conscious effort to prevent deadly conflict by strengthening the CSO sector. In addition to funding and technical assistance to effective Sarajevo-based CSOs, small grants to women’s groups or other organizations engaged in cross-ethnic programming involving women would be a wise investment.



## Enlist the help of the private sector

Segments of the business community may be receptive to efforts to dampen the prospects for renewed violence because they have a lot to lose and something to offer. Programs that target economically marginalized young people more likely to succeed with the active participation of the business community. Business leaders at the national and local level are well positioned to influence government decision makers to pursue policies that ameliorate conditions that could give rise to violence.

Business associations may be particularly well placed to contribute to conflict prevention goals because like labor unions they have the potential to reach across ethnic and entity boundaries. In advocating for policies that are favorable to businesspeople, these associations are concerned with shared economic interests that can transcend inter-communal divisions. They also can help encourage mutually beneficial ties between businesses in different entities and cantons, and between members of different ethnic groups in the same area. The objectives should be a more explicit part of the program. Taking common economic interests as the starting point, Mission activities could stress good corporate citizenship and cooperative undertakings to advance reconciliation. Buttressing these organizations should continue as part of civil society support programs as well as efforts to promote private sector development.

The recently completed grant to the Women's Economic Network could be followed up by similarly inspired efforts to foster women's economic empowerment, such as promoting links between entities/cantons to improve access to business services, credit and employment and business advocacy for economic policy change. Other components could focus directly on inter-ethnic cooperation and capitalize on what appears to be greater willingness by women to work across the ethnic divide.

## Bolster civic education and tolerance training

Growing up in an ethnically divided democratic society with deeply held grievances and divergent narratives to explain what happened during the 1990s makes it imperative that young people be exposed to civic education and tolerance training. Standardizing school curricula across the entities is an uphill battle. But to promote a common understanding of recent history are complemented by basic civic education that focuses principally on the importance of an informed and politically engaged citizenry in a healthy democratic system. The Team duly notes the civic education program launched by the Embassy's Office of Public Affairs and would counsel USAID assistance implementers to make use of materials, where appropriate, in their own programs. Civic education programs are more likely to be successful in motivating younger people to become involved in the public sphere if classroom learning is done in tandem with practical projects in the community. Political parties that make a concerted effort to attract younger voters could reinforce the content of civic education curricula and materials.

If it is not already the case, tolerance training should be incorporated into any civic education curriculum/training or offered as a separate module, again focusing primarily on young people but with opportunities for adults as well. A grant to Boston University to develop a tolerance curriculum to be pilot tested in a small number of schools is a commendable start. The Team would strongly endorse its rapid rollout and expansion. The Mission might also work with the UN and other donors in this area.

The Mission should encourage the broadcast media to take an active interest in both civic education and tolerance programming. Media might also be approached as part of a public outreach/education campaign. Ultimately, to be effective, tolerance training in a society with deep social cleavages has to address the causes of those divisions rather than simply exhort citizens to embrace diversity and recognize the rights of all members of the society to live in peace. In tolerance training, special attention should be paid to young people who may have directly or more likely indirectly (e.g. loss of a family member)

experienced violence during the war or its aftermath. This group bears the psychological scars of deadly conflict and as they come into adulthood, may be more vulnerable to mobilization for violence.

## **Train police forces that contribute to conflict mitigation**

The Assessment Team lacks the technical expertise to provide concrete recommendations on how to ensure that police forces become part of the solution rather than a contributor to the problems and challenges of preventing localized violence. We are aware of USG efforts in this area through the Department of Justice/ICITAP and similar programs undertaken by the UN (IPTF) and the EU. Regrettably, the Team did not have the opportunity to interview program officials to explore the degree to which training focuses on techniques for dealing with politically inspired violence. We would simply suggest that the Mission discuss this potential concern with the implementers.

Confidence in the integrity and fairness of the police force can make an enormous difference to the sense of security felt by minority communities in settings such as BiH. This confidence turns in part on having ethnically integrated police forces, training and practice in work with different ethnic constituencies, and strategies such as community policing that bring officers into ongoing and much closer contact with the citizenry. Combined with the proper training, it puts such officers in position to defuse the inevitable minor incidents that have ethnic undercurrents and therefore carry the risk of sparking wider violence. . The Team was encouraged to learn of a few instances where competent police work prevented potentially dangerous situations from escalating. There are positive lessons to be learned from those episodes.

## **Reach out to other donors and harness Mission human resources**

Coordinating and collaborating with other donors can be time consuming, labor intensive and frustrating. But it can also be tremendously valuable when it works. The prospect of declining resources makes it all the more important for USG/USAID to reach out to other donors. The Assessment Team is cautiously optimistic that some key European allies and international organizations will be receptive to the findings and recommendations in this report and would consider initiatives to address more directly possible conflict drivers. Senior officials at the Office of the High Representative and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights think that the risks of conflict have been unwisely discounted and that persisting ethnic-based cleavages and tensions leave no room for complacency. To our knowledge there has not been much in the way of an ongoing discussion with other donors about conflict-related issues. That would be a place to start. That donor cooperation has proven successful in other spheres provides a point of departure for trying to coalesce interest in conflict prevention and mitigation.

Finally, the Assessment Team also recommends that Mission staff convene to discuss and debate the report with special attention to the program mapping and recommendations sections since these have changed somewhat from the initial debrief in Sarajevo. Even if such discussions do not produce a consensus on program approaches, they are sure to stimulate additional ideas across the Mission's portfolio and perhaps identify new synergies between different program areas. The Team benefited considerably from a wide-ranging FSN-only session on the present situation in BiH in which participants debated issues of social cohesion/cleavages, confronting the past and the possibility of violent conflict in the future. They welcomed the opportunity to discuss the past conflict and risks of future violence which is little discussed among BiH citizens or in most corners of the international community.

## Appendix: List of Interviewees

Dino Abazovic, Director, University of Sarajevo Human Rights Centre  
Nidzar Ahmetasevic, Journalist, Slobodna Bosna (Sarajevo)  
Mr. Anicic, CARITAS (Banja Luka)  
Ivan Barbalic, President, Alumni Association of the Center for Interdisciplinary Postgraduate Studies of the University of Sarajevo (ACIPS)  
Ljubo Beslic, Deputy Mayor and member of HDZ (Mostar)  
Stijepan Boskovic, Mayor of Stolac  
Thomas Brennan, U.S. Department of State, Bureau for Intelligence and Research (Washington)  
Merritt Broady, head of Minority Returns Program, USAID/BiH  
Goran Bubalo, Representative in the Former Yugoslavia, Quaker Peace Teams and Social Witness (Sarajevo)  
Hajra Catic, Women of Srebrenica  
Center for Peace Building (Sanski Most)  
Ljiljana Cickovic, Director, Women's Center of Trebinje  
Anne Convery, desk officer for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bureau for Europe and Eurasia, USAID/Washington  
Dobroslav Cuk, Mayor of Trebinje and member SNSD party  
Sabina Djapo, Project Office, Department for International Development (Sarajevo)  
Dino Dipa, Director, Prism Center (Sarajevo)  
Zdravko Djuranovic, Deputy Mayor (Tuzla)  
Elvir Duliman, Project Co-coordinator, Nansen Dialogue Center (Mostar)  
Claudia Dumas, rule of law specialist, Bureau for Europe and Eurasia, USAID/Washington  
Mark Ellingstad, Office of Democracy and Governance, USAID/BiH  
Sarah Farnsworth, Balkans Division, Office of European Country Affairs, Bureau for Europe and Eurasia, USAID/Washington  
Catherine (Kate) Fearon, Head of the Governance and Parliamentary Section, Political Department, OHR  
Enver Ferhatovic, Head of the Federation Unit, Governance and Parliamentary Section, Political Department, Office of the High Representative  
Jakob Finci, Head of the Inter-Religious Council and President of the Jewish Community of Bosnia-Herzegovina (Sarajevo)  
John Fraser, National Democratic Institute (Banja Luka)  
Nada Golubovic, Udružene žene (Banja Luka)  
Peter Graves, Media Specialist, Bureau for Europe and Eurasia, USAID/Washington  
Zdravko Grebo, Professor and Director, Center for Interdisciplinary Postgraduate Studies, University of Sarajevo  
Donald Hays, Deputy High Representative (Sarajevo).  
Michael Henning, head of Democracy and Governance Office, USAID/BiH  
Zoran Indzic - Chief of the police (Prijeedor)

Zoran Jaksic, Director, Youth Forum (Trebinje)  
Nerma Jelacic, Institute for War and Peace Reporting (Sarajevo)  
Dragan Jernic, Editor-in-Chief, Nezavisne (Banja Luka)  
Milos Jovanovic, President of SDS (Zvornik)  
Tarik Jusic, Program Director, Media Center (Sarajevo)  
Tina Kaidanow, Deputy Chief of Mission, U.S. Embassy Sarajevo  
Kasim Karjenic, High School Coordinator (Stolac)  
Zeljka Knezevic, USAID/BiH (Banja Luka)  
Elvis Kondzic, Youth Policy Information Officer, UNDP (Sarajevo)  
Ambassador Richard Kozlaurich, former U.S. ambassador to Bosnia-Herzegovina  
Emily Coffman Kronic, Regional Director, Southeastern Europe, World Conference of Religions for Peace (Sarajevo)  
Hamdija Lipovaca, Mayor of Bihac  
Mesan Lupic, Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees (Zvornik)  
Abdurahman Malkic, Mayor of Srebrenica  
Murisa Maric, head of DON (Prijedor)  
Tomo Markovic, primary school co-principal (Stolac)  
Alma Masic, International Commission on Missing Persons (ICMP), (Sarajevo)  
Stana Medic, civil society representative (Srebrenica)  
Amb. John Menzies, former U.S. ambassador to Bosnia-Herzegovina  
“Merhamet”, organization dealing with Bosniak returnees (Banja Luka)  
Jadranka Milicevic, Coordinator, Women to Women (Sarajevo)  
Mladen Mimic, Milicanin (Milici)  
Ministry for Human Rights and Returnees, Banja Luka office.  
Gasim Mujicic, (Banja Luka)  
Muharem Murselovic, Member of Parliament, SDA (Prijedor)  
Robert Nash, U.S. Department of State, Bureau for Intelligence and Research (Washington)  
Mediha Nuhbegovic, Office of the Mayor (Tuzla)  
Niamh O’Connor, Country Director, National Democratic Institute (Sarajevo)  
Zarko Papic (Dr.), BiH Director, Independent Bureau for Humanitarian Issues (Sarajevo)  
Senad Pecanin, editor-in-chief, Dani Weekly (Sarajevo)  
Hatizda Pecenovica, Director, Zene Suna (Bihac)  
Slavisa Pejic, Youth Organization (Milici)  
Igor Radoicic, SNSD Party (Banja Luka)  
Branka Rajner, Office of Human Rights (Tuzla)  
Madeleine Rees, Director, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (Sarajevo)  
Bob Sanders, Chief of Party, DAI’s Government Accountability Project (Sarajevo)  
Mary Schockledge, office head, Department for International Development (Sarajevo)  
SDS senior party official in Trebinje

Nikola Sekulovic, Executive Director, NGO League for the Protection of Private Property and Human Rights (Trebinje)

Daniel Serwer, U.S. Institute of Peace (Washington)

Selma Sijercic, Democracy Office, USAID/BiH

John Seong, Director of Office of Economic Restructuring, USAID/BiH

Vehid Shehic, President, Forum of Citizens (Tuzla)

Svetlana Stanislavljevics, USAID/BiH (Banja Luka)

Karen Stone, Director of Program Office, USAID/BiH

Howard Sumka, Mission Director, USAID/BiH

Mirsad Tokaca, President, Research and Documentation Center (Sarajevo)

Tarik Ucanbarlic, Coordinator for Confidence Building, Integrated Youth Programme, UNDP (Sarajevo)

Bego Uvalic, Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees (Tuzla)

Vladimira Vucic, National Democratic Institute (Banja Luka)

Susan Woodward, Professor, Graduate Center, City University of New York